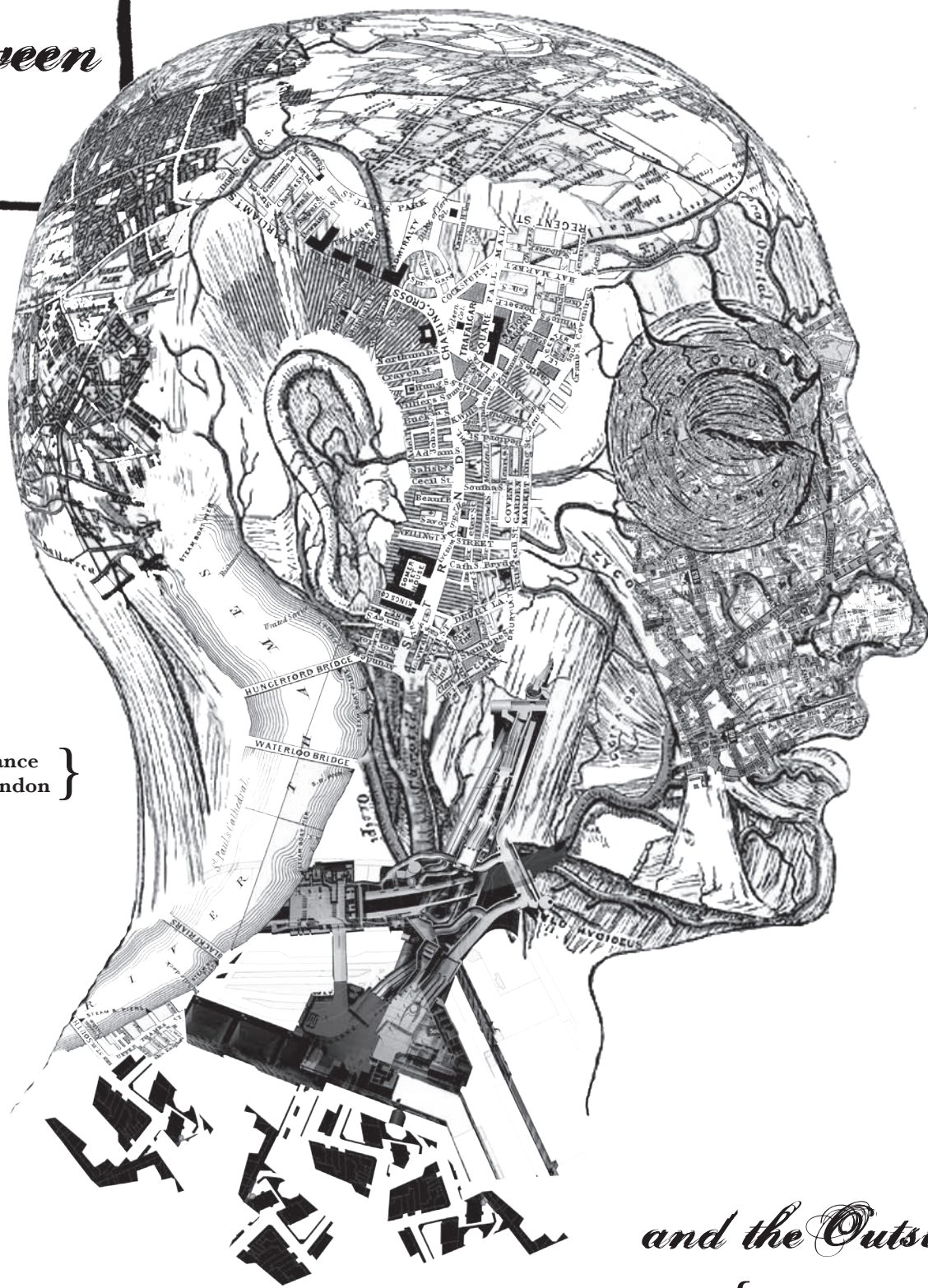


**Urgencies
of Everyday
Life:**

*Between
here ...*



{ voices of resistance
from occupied london }

and the Outside

{ Spring 2008; issue #3
once again, free }

Contents

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This issue would never have reached completion without invaluable help from Mika, Zygmunt Bauman, Edd, Nina Roth and Paolo Cirio, Lindsay, Christos Filippidis, Leila, Simon, our friends in Italy and Spain, Charalambos and Theodore Tsekeris and the lovely people at Footprint Workers Co-op. Thanks!

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All of this issue's design and illustrations were created by Klara Jaya Brekke. Jaya is the journal's very own in-house illustrator, by now almost unconsciously a dedicated Londoner, nevertheless in a seemingly perpetual, urgent soul-searching between London and the outside. In any case she can be reached at jaya@riseup.net

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own and out in three seconds

"I used to work for Starbucks; they would teach you that the perfect Starbucks coffee takes twenty-two seconds to come out of the espresso machine. Then in came a new manager with his new business plan – during rush hours a Starbucks coffee should now take only three seconds."

Life in the city spins around urgency: urgency to get from A to B, to go up the career ladder, the property ladder, to become someone, to overcome and outgrow your up-and-coming neighbourhood on time. The second issue of *Occupied London* was dedicated to counter-summits, those relatively rare moments in our movement when we meet under intensified conditions breaking away from our individual everyday normality. This issue was going to be about this very normality – and yet, we quickly came to realise there simply isn't such a thing: What passes for normality is a permanent state of urgency. Time is the urban battlefield we're thrown into, always chasing the next task-in-hand. Pressed to do as much as possible in minimum time and even, simultaneously: to exist and function in parallel spaces in real time. Today, such multi-present state in real time becomes *"not the opposite of 'delayed time' but only of the 'present'"* (Paul Virilio: *Open Sky*). To be present in more than a single reality renders them all unreal; it means being present in none.

Recently, the head of Scotland Yard's Visual Images, Identifications and Detections Office admitted that *"there's no fear of CCTV"*. He speculated: *"Why don't people fear it? They think the cameras are not working"*. Think, for a moment, not of the fearless person in front of the camera but of the emotionless watchers behind it. In their tiny monitor rooms, they record outside life but as for themselves, they barely record a presence - their energy and existence at all moments strictly channeled between their eyes and their screens. In the outside, in the settings recorded by these screens, their existence is even less so, stripped down to mere observer status - the rest of their living experience lost somewhere between their monitor rooms and the outside.

That they are in that way lost, can only be positive - but we have occupied ourselves enough with what they do; the question is now on us. An urgent demand for multi-present existence is also forced upon us; the question is, how would it be possible to face up to it and even reclaim it? We hear, over and over again, that we are faced with a situation in which it is *"now or never"* for us, for our movement; that the urgency for radical change is overwhelming, more than it has ever been. And still: for as long as we are crushed under this reality it will always be now or never - we can never take a step back. It's now and always.

For now, we've taken a reality check (p.4). We've listened to voices talking of past anarchist influences (p.45); lessons learned from urban housing struggles (p.40) and from separatist experiences in our very own city (p.35); we've been told of the changing face of culture in the globalised city (p.22) and of the setting of new bio-political conditions within it (p.11). And we are glad to present voices that vow to keep fighting, in pretty London or elsewhere (p.36) and to publish theses (p.28) that hint towards a way forward. It's finally time to think, and as always, it's time to act. They'll give us a few seconds, but we'll take them on for ever._

Last time I took a plane, I guess it was in August, I met someone. There was no immediate attraction, but we talked deeply, promptly. She told me not to take my drinks with me any further, she made me undress my shoes, my jacket and also my belt. That was very fast for the first meeting, but she told me to relax. Hearing strange noises, she told me, she needs to touch me. I was confused, but I accepted and it felt good. While body checking we were talking about regulatory power and questions I never dared to ask. It was so intense. When she stopped touching, I was left alone with an emptiness of not knowing why all this had happened. And then, I guess, it just occurred to me, that I had to kill a girl called reality.





**Check
check,
reality
recheck**

Paolo Cirio and Nina Roth are the people behind check-check.org, a project *"designed to deprogram people from the security theatre at airports"*. How do they plan to do this? In their own words, deprogramming is a sort of debugging of the social code that is given to us since we were born. In the airport case the social code is the script of "Security Theater" or the "Theater of the Absurd" that is a spectacle in a grand scale done around the world. The deprogrammer "Check-Check.org" operates with a friendly psychological method: everyone can read the experiences, feelings, emotions and unpredictable behaviors of other mind-controlled 'victims'. So with more consciousness and less embarrassment, because others already unclenched, people generally open up to each other, expressing their self-doubts about their existence and reality. Everyone can share opinions and find confirmations; a practice as an antidote to deceptive brainwashing and a return to a free mind.

Here at Occupied London we are also intrigued by airports. These non-places of Augé (1995), emblematic of a liquid society re-constructing itself around fear while constantly on the move, precursors of a social reality that is already here, long-arrived in their runways and arrival halls. A reality that keeps going further. Imagine: *"Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten your seatbelts, we shall be shortly landing onto non-places endlessly springing up, encroaching the urban entity and reshaping its reality -creating, in fact, a reality of a new type"*. And lowering the microphone, he whispers: *"...a reality some of us want dead already"*.

The airport becomes increasingly important the more the supermarket, the mall, the library, the pavement and the street come to resemble it. Yet, as pointed out in the interview, airport security initially copied the urban, even if it was the urban in its *"state of exception"*, i.e. when cities were, or felt to be, under attack. In so doing the airport acts as an intra-urban time hub: it connects the urban state of exception to what would pass for normality. For this it needs our attention and we are grateful to Nina and Paolo for pointing to its direction and for kindly giving us the interview that follows._

I Killed a Girl Called Reality

Occupied London: What is it that intrigues you about airports – what blows your mind away in these spaces?

Paolo Cirio: Low-cost airlines, the global tourism industry, migrants and new youth lifestyles are some of the main causes of the boom in flights, airports and connected infrastructures. Indeed, while airports become a place crossed by a mass of people, at the same time they are becoming a media, to the point where we can now talk of a new *"mass media"*. Often we study the power of images, TV propaganda and newspapers' news coverage, but we don't think about other types of media,

media that we often perform more than we listen, read or watch in our daily lives. The idea of “*check-check.org*” was born when I saw the mass of people repeating absurd acts; they simply obey a symbolic “*mise-en-scène*”. Most people are probably aware of the absurdity and the uselessness of security checks but they simply follow laws and rules without even thinking of the possibility of rising up against them. Is this not then, a sort of training aiming to sabotage the sense of reality by inserting fabricated truths which are manifestly lies? It’s different from other kind of theories about effect of media operandi. In this case it is not the depiction of reality with strategic use of information and of communication (classical mass media, with images, videos, rhetoric, etc.) that gives us a lack of meaning, but it is in fact reality itself which is directly dramatized and forced in a meaningless representation. The definition of torture given by the CIA is a good metaphor of how contemporary propaganda strategies work: “*Torture is a set of techniques designed to put prisoners into a state of deep disorientation and shock in order to force them to make concessions against their will*”¹. We are under psychological torture provided by “*semiological signs*” tools.

Nina Rorth: I love the promises I get at airports: the assumed possibility of going wherever I want to and everyone else can do so as well, those consuming all those glittering shops - and you are right there, and just because you take a flight you think you are able to afford all this stuff... and then, after a while, I start thinking and start getting bored and scared and I turn aggressive and nervous, I feel persecuted and betrayed - all at the same place in nearly the same moment. There are so many individuals crossing, all with different destinations, diverse backgrounds - it’s quite a sci-fi moment that I have while being at airports or even thinking of them. Talking of our project, the security measures appear to be absolutely absurd: one day this, the other day that, right behind the “*checkpoint*” you may purchase most products that someone took away from you minutes ago - where’s the sense in all that?

OL: Corporate media reported the following story: “*Robert Dziekanski was a Polish worker who was tasered to death by police at Vancouver International Airport in Canada. Robert was migrating to Canada to reunite with his mother, who spent over ten hours waiting for him in the airport’s reception lounge. Only a couple of meters away her son was being assassinated by the police.*”

The way we understand it, the title of your project -“I killed a girl called reality”- implies that a state of emergency is in place in the airport, where “reality” as we know it elsewhere dies. And yet, Dziekanski’s death was as real - and tragic - as that of De Menezes (the Brazilian commuter shot dead by London’s Metropolitan Police). Does reality as we know it die exclusively in the airport, or does it die everywhere?

NR: I guess we intended to speak about reality in general. I, for example, have the impression of not knowing why I do stuff, why I react on certain issues and not on others that concern my personal reality. Speaking of structural reality - I don’t know that either. Everything seems to be constructed: which TV series are shown, what sort of popcorn you can buy, why some people can cross a border and others can’t and why there are stateless people who have to live for years in the transit areas of airports. So in fact airports are like a mini-world and so to this mini-world all the measures to fight terrorism or whatever are applied and you see and feel it immediately, without any filter, pretty raw. So the answer might be: reality already died, or it was never alive anywhere.

PC: Paulo Virilio in his book ‘City of Panic’ has written: “*Whence the sudden permutation in which the INFOWAR appears not only as a ‘war of weaponry’ but especially as a WAR ON THE REAL; a war entailing full-scale annihilation of the sense of reality in which the ‘weapon of mass communication’ is strategically superior to the ‘weapon of mass destruction’, whether atomic, chemical or bacteriological... And so, after ‘war tactics’ like camouflage and various lures capable of hoodwinking the enemy, the main stratagem suddenly becomes the ‘speeding up of reality’ creating a panic-induced movement that destroys our sense of orientation, in other words, our view of the world.*”²

In this way, everything has a symbolic impact and reality was killed everywhere, it’s the main tragic

crime of our age. I don't want to appear cynical but the two assassinations that you've cited were probably no accidents, or in any case they were useful if only in order to seek consensus for the "state of emergency", which translates into immense instability, permanent danger and crisis, and henceforth panic for any citizen.

The assassinations of Dziekanski and De Menezes were symbolic acts (as is terrorism in general): Of course they are tragic, but the function is in the level of representation, not about real physical repression, like in a riot or in a war. I think they have been sacrificed for the purposes of "terror hysteria" propaganda: yes, this is in the sphere of hyperreality and for this reason, it's even more sad.

I want to make clear that hyperreality, although just a tactic in order to manage public opinion of citizens of countries who are involved in wars –abroad it is about the citizens of countries under attack, about the brutality of violence on bodies, which is terribly strong. Reality is a serious thing missed in our mind, but it still exists somewhere.

We should be thinking about the final goals of power (capitalism and their administrators), its tools and reasons of existence. What I mean by this is that if a way exists in order to stabilize reality in the culture of common values and if we work around media and its message, we will no longer be shields for bombs. But if right now the reality is just the "annihilation of the reality", which reality shall we kill? Have we tried to kill the worst with our consciences? With the right weapons? I ask myself this question every day.

OL: In 'Splintering Urbanism', Graham and Marvin mention that in London, "the so-called 'Ring of Steel' supports electronic surveillance systems and armed guards on every entry point into the financial district. Cars entering have their number plates read automatically. Stolen cars are detected within three seconds. And the potential for the facial-recognition of drivers, by linking automatically to digitised photographs on national licence records, exists in the system and has recently been tested."

This again raises the question of how unique the airport is in its "state of emergency" features. Only a few weeks ago it was announced that most of Britain's train stations, for example, will be

getting baggage scanning facilities similar to those found in airports. Is it the city, then, that is being airportised?

NR: Of course the airport isn't unique in its "state of emergency" features. For example, in Germany for the male soccer world cup 2006 the police, and with them the politicians (or vice versa), were using material and strategies to be prepared for any "emergencies". That meant controlling people, not permitting assumed dangerous people to leave their houses, re-establishing border controls, using cameras, scan machines, rfid-chips, secret service information, establishing data files without people knowing about it etc. I suppose it was just to get used to the devices and maybe even having the topic appear once in the media, so that next time it is applied it won't be such a big issue anymore. The G8 summit, its protests and the police reaction made this quite evident. I don't actually know where and when so-called security measures were first applied but I guess it had something to do with property, so the question we should ask might be: Who owns the place we are staying and we are filmed at? Why can he/she do so? What are the possibilities to counter-act? "I killed a girl called reality" just wants to inform that there is such a "state of emergency" but in terms of freedom. Additionally the project tries to outline, with its interactive features, that there are more people who realize the problem. We are not alone!

OL: "...in the early days of airports, there was no such thing as the rivers of passengers that flow through the sculpted steel and glass façades of contemporary terminal buildings (...) The huge milelong terminal structures are carefully built to facilitate the mobility of passengers, baggage, and cargo to their destination. To ensure the security of the country the flows are entering, while at the same time to protect the very means of their travel, these flows must be watched and controlled. The airport is well and truly a space under surveillance."

Here, Adey (2004) implies that the transformation of the airport coincides with its growth and that together with the flux of the populations came the need to tighten the surveillance of these spaces of mobility. Is it the airport, then that is being urbanised?

PC: Hakim Bey has written “*Our architecture has become symbolic, we have enclosed ourselves in the manifestations of abstract thought*”.³ Airports are urbanized as much as other public places of our modernity, at the end becoming “*non-places*”, to use the term of Marc Augè. I’m ever impressed by how any airport has the same architectural structures, interior design, functionality infrastructures and even the same shops with the same products. They simply look like shopping centres, but in a place completely out of history, geographically not located and culturally not recognized. The airport is the pure new urbanism abstracted from our heritage, it’s the triumph of the pure consumerist world and the controlled society, indeed the perfect place in order to have everyone’s mind and body under control. It’s very well explained with the words of Virilio in his book ‘The Information Bomb’: “*The ‘real city’, which is situated in a precise place and in which gave its name to the politics of notions, is giving way to the ‘virtual city’ that de-territorialized meta-city which in hence to become the site of that ‘metropolititics’, the totalitarian or rather globalitarian character of which will be plain for all see.*”⁴ In terms of security measures in the urban environment, we know that the first check-points were there before airplanes, so airports have been urbanized and militarized to look like towns and borders in war time.

OL: You ask: “...and what about the not-scanned suitcases – aren’t they blowing your mind?” They are indeed. Waiting at that never-ending queue, ordered to drop your coffee while your suitcase is swiftly transferred to the aircraft without a glitch. And yet most people will not react to such a contradiction. It is done for the sake of safety, they say – all they need do is to say that, and passengers will obey. Isn’t that blowing your mind?

PC: Well, and what about the not-checked CIA’s secret flights in Europe (like the “*extraordinary rendition program*” - Trevor Paglen has done some brilliant work on that), and what about the corruption of administrators and employees at airports - aren’t they blowing your mind? I’ve been informed of illicit traffic at airports, employers

stealing everything (a common scandal in Italy) and criminal organizations often using corrupt employees in order to ship all sorts of stuff - yet the largest corruption comes, of course, from the top of the pyramid. We can find contradictions everywhere, but yes, our project would focus on the “*security theatre*” as a form of spin and on the reactions of people when facing manifested absurdities.

NR: It is, absolutely. And I guess right there a strategy fulfils itself which I can’t really grasp and which I don’t really understand either. An obeying mass is easier to handle, of course, and if there are more and more people, strategies need to be established that will get them buying, get them smooth, get them obeying – if Prozac can’t do it, a well constructed explanation might help. When I was fourteen, on the envelope of every letter, instead of my name I wrote a saying I once heard in a movie (or read in a book or heard in a song), which was: question everything.

OL: What is the response of people writing to check-check.org so far?

NR: We had some nice feedback that hasn’t been published on the website. Some was on the topic itself - a lot of people told me their personal stories that they didn’t dare to leave in a comment, but the ones who left a story were from all over the world, some more bizarre than others. Some comments were on the music (which was composed specifically for the project) and others highlighted that there are more problems to be solved and more urgent security issues; in Germany something like the new passports with biometric data or new laws on saving online data for half a year. So there’s still some work to do...

PC: Right now we have visitors from all continents and from over fifty countries. The website is just a tool for sharing impressions and experiences around the world, but to be honest, I have heard and seen the best stories directly at the airport. I enjoy seeing the faces of the people while they act out absolutely absurd things, when they become

angry about the confiscated bottle of water and when they have to have their shoes checked. We want to do a movie, a sort of documentary about it, so we are looking for producers... The topic is ever more in discussion, as can be seen by the research paper by a team at the Harvard School of Public Health, published on 20 Dec '07:

*"Researchers could not find any studies showing whether the time-consuming process of X-raying carry-on luggage prevents hijackings or attacks. They also found no evidence to suggest that making passengers take off their shoes and confiscating small items prevented any incidents."*⁵

OL: Having recently visited London, can you describe your experiences of the city?

PC: I was in London on 7 July '05, so I saw the panic in the streets the weeks after. Inspiration for "check-check" probably came from this experience - during those days I did a fake "Public Notice" label around East London in Banksy's style, with these words:

"THIS IS A HIGH PARANOIA AREA. If you suffer from fear, anxiety, panic, please support our troops in Iraq or buy something"

(see <http://www.bidibid.org/high-paranoia/high-paranoia-2.jpg>)

the number of terrorist attacks today is smaller. It's just one of millions of contradictions. When in London, I always think of the movies *"Brazil"* by Terry Gilliam and *"Children of Men"* of Alfonso Cuarón._

¹The Shock Doctrine, Page 24, Naomi Klein, 2007, Knopf, ISBN 9780676978001

²City of Panic, Page 34, By Paul Virilio, 2005, Berg, ISBN 1845202244

³Hakim Bey, 'The information war', Ctheory, 18 (1), 1995 Virtual Futures, Page 5, By Joan Broadhurst Dixon, Eric J. Cassidy, 1998, Routledge, ISBN 0415133793

⁴The Information Bomb, Page 11, By Paul Virilio, 1998, Galilèe, ISBN 1844670597

⁵Reuters, 21 Dec 2007
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N20228618.htm>
The whole research:
<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/335/7633/1290>

⁶Beyond Fear, Page 249, By Bruce Schneier, 2003, Springer, ISBN 0387026207

10 Recently, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said that Britain would begin improving its security systems at train stations, airports, utility buildings and other crowded or strategic places to decrease its vulnerability to terrorist attacks. But any kind of new anti-terrorist plans are *"largely ineffective and they come at an enormous expense, both monetarily and in loss of privacy"* in the words of Bruce Schneier who has introduced the idea of the *"Security Theater"* ⁶. Additionally, the lack of prevention of previous attacks is proof of the inefficacy of surveillance systems. Again, I see the hype of anti-terror measures as an internal PYOPS strategy aiming to raise consensus in war, spreading the culture of fear and tighten control over citizens' lives. One example: While measures in the '70s against European's terrorism in cold war time and measures for contemporary radical Islamic's terrorism are incomparable, at the same time,



The Metro as a bio-political condition and the role of sanitation in the Athenian example

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Originally published as a post-script by Filippidis, Christos (2007) in
“Body, Space and the Politics of Cleanliness and Sanitation”, Athens:
Libertarian Culture (Φιλίππιδης, Χ. (2007): Σώμα, Χώρος και Πολιτικές
Καθαριότητας, Αθήνα: Ελευθεριακή Κουλτούρα)

Re-published in Blackout Issue 10 under the pseudonym of c-krumel. The journal Blackout
(<http://www.blackout.gr/>) is a publishing
initiative coming out of the occupation of Yfanet in Thessaloniki, Greece.

An unclean introduction

On the 23d of March 2001 a fragrance called “Madaleine” was introduced in three stations of London (St James’s Park, Euston and Picadilly Circus) in an effort to make the Underground smell better. Media reported the project was discontinued the next day as it was making people sick. How tempting to speak of a rotting world, how tempting to speak of an authority seized with fright in the face of a crumbling social order whose values are in decay. Yet, step outside the underground and the obnoxious systemic belief in its own perpetual existence is inscribed all over.

“The lust for order is a lust for death”, or so an old anarchist slogan goes... And then, *“because the bequest for sanitation is a demand for order and because the appropriate spatial order will ensure, first and foremost, to banish the unclean body and the unclean action not complying with the rules”*: The bequest for sanitation equals a lust for death; The fear of biological death leads, slowly but surely, to social death.

In the essay that follows Athens’ newly-built metro is aptly presented as a vehicle of a new social order; it is understood as *“a mechanism of discipline, an educational body of the urban way of existing, of living”*. When looking at the same question from the London perspective, it is maybe surprising to find that its underground network (same like, say, NYC or Paris) promotes sanitation much less than in the Athenian example. Or even, a reversed condition often exists, one where underground train lines and “dirty” underground platforms cut through manically sanitised, heavily gentrified urban areas. Parts of these networks become underground oases (or maybe, rather, currents) of the unclean. Naturally, whether this is an inverse process or relates to the timeframes of urban development of the metropolises in the cores and the peripheries of the capitalist grid.

One can be assured that in its early years London Underground would have played a similar role in promoting orderly thoroughfare. It still does so, of course, but the changing face of the overground city has overtaken it in pace and might now seem to render this part of its functioning obsolete. This is, of course, far from true: London’s fragrances, NYC’s extensive network of CCTV cameras and random bag checks... Hints of upcoming, soon-to-be imposed conditions on the ground are often offered to us from (quite literally) the underground. All we need do is listen out for them._

The presence and reminder of death in the daily urban reality is enforced by constantly increasing elements that illuminate the fragile biology of human nature. The tools required for such an illumination are primarily psychological - investing in the fear of all that is uncontrollable. Fear of death in the everyday, whether triggered by the sight of a dangerous, inflictious being or organised within the spatial limits of a “tainting” area, does not concern the disease in itself but rather the possibility of contagion that one holds. Therefore, fear of the disease (as yet another element amongst the objects surrounding us) concerns the integrity of our very existence; such a condition cannot but hang as a permanent threat and as an integral element of the public sphere. This threat corrupts biological functions and yet, before so doing, it dislocates the process of social reproduction by placing fear at the core of human relationships. It does so by shouting out the organising role of death in the development of these relationships. Death ought to stay outside such relationships and yet this absence becomes central in the way in which life itself anxiously takes shape. Even if such fear takes forms that vary across different societies, it is still established upon relationships concerning some order (*life*) and the possible breach of this very order (*disease, death*). The deadly

materiality of the disease is soon to be symbolised, subsequently organising its pending communication with the “other” around this heavy symbolism.

The fear of disease arises in places where the biological lens identifies loci of infection as well as other places characterised by an increasing social turmoil, where different bodies and their cultures are intermingled: just like in open squares.

Susan Sontag sheds some light at the symbolic power of the disease by explaining that debauchery, decay, desecration, weakness are identified with it; the disease itself becomes a metaphor. Epidemic diseases were an often-used symbol of social disorder (Sontag: 1989). Constant biological reminders gradually become user protocols, conventions and exclusions. The ‘biological’, then, carries a heavy social burden... Which is no other than the notion of cleanliness, a notion called to secure the adequacy of bio-social bonds. Biological and social life meet at the horizon of cleanliness and purity: The two are to guarantee healthy biological reproduction, to strengthen the chemical defense of somatic cells, but also, and most importantly, they are to symbolise the preservation of an appropriate social order.

The clean and thus healthy body ought to belong to a ‘clean’ and ‘healthy’ society and such a relation can only be fostered in a clean space. From the description of 19th century

cities and the moral extensions of the materially clean to the impure human bodies ‘sentencing’ themselves to death; from the sanitation rituals of non-western societies and the maintenance of their own order to the sanitary quarantine and the concentration camp, cleanliness and purity come to organise bodies, spaces and meanings. They are called, in other words, to reinstate order: Solicitude for the propagation of public hygiene and health can only describe, in bio-political terms, the role of cleanliness in the spatial production and social reproduction. The clean and the healthy derive from the physical and the biological sphere but come to habituate symbolic worlds; they become a moral and social duty and they can only spread via a political operation that does not require executive authorities in order to succeed.

The clean and the healthy, initially to be found within the discrete boundaries of the biological aspect of life, are therefore violently inserted in a social condition which in turn needs them in its quest to enforce its own claims, drawing power from such very objects of biological neutrality. Clean space, a symbol of the healthy body, thus constructs its own qualities upon the virtues of the latter: It composes them around a bequest for the accommodation of a ‘clean’ social body and its elementary functions. The bio-political dimension of the clean is expressed whilst power

demands appropriate relations between the subject and its own body inasmuch as other bodies. Cleanliness as a way of using the body can only suggest ways of use and habitation of space itself: The demand for cleanliness is a demand for order and the appropriate spatial order will ensure, first and foremost, the banishment of the impure body and impure actions that might refuse to comply. British anthropologist Mary Douglas introduced the notion of “*matter out of place*” in order to explore the rich worlds of the clean and the dirty:

“If we can abstract pathogenecity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity” (Douglas: 1966)

The impure and the diseased do not, therefore, meet in the physical sphere only. Far from that: Suffocating within this sphere, they seem to construct an entire symbolic world and the relations that come with it. The impure and the diseased form concepts that are first and foremost symbolic and should be understood as such. The

clean and the dirty (both their spatial and bodily expressions) are transformed from material identifications to conjuring concepts, a transformation that leads to their engagement with mechanisms of social reproduction. From biological properties they are transformed into tools of social classification and in this way, they are (bio)politicised: The most inner relations of body and space gradually become politically negotiable; They ought to reflect the class to which they belong.

How is such a transformation signified in the case of the Athenian Metro? How does the quest for cleanliness and purity leave the biological world and reach to the very heart of the condition of confinement? The character of the construction in question was clearly organised around the displacement of a number of biological functions. What are such functions? The ban on eating and drinking, urinating and defecating within the strictly defined vicinity of a transportation medium affects activities which, by their own nature, produce waste. These are therefore excluded as dis-placed material, ‘place’ in this case comprising an infrastructure openly showcasing its a-historical nature: it cannot perish, it cannot be defaced, it does not age. The metro as a lust for order comprises a bio-political place to the extent that it undertakes organising the crucial and near-biological

human need for transportation. It already, then, holds such a bodily function and a need that is politically negotiable. It already highlights within it an element capable of holding a common denominator of a collective urban identity, some identity articulated in terms of organic movement. It highlights this in face of regulations, protocols of use and laws. The displacement, however, of the aforementioned biological functions from such an infrastructure extends further the bio-political dimension of the metro, bringing it into managerial fields: An entire social construction is organised around the denunciation of a number of bodily functions which (*seemingly ostracised as they might be*) are involved in this very mechanism through their absence.

Agamben writes in reference to the concentration camp: “*[it is] the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule.*” The concentration camp is included via its very own exception. This underground infrastructure ought first and foremost to hold biological characteristics afar, therefore establishing a social contract in the power of a biological insufficiency. Such a displacement manifests precisely the way in which the biological aspect becomes an object of political negotiation. Cleanliness and sanitation comprise the regulators of this displacement - it is them that will expose the unclean

body to the clean space, having first excluded, thanks to their intellectual tools, both the crucial biological functions that entail pollution and any other social behaviour that could disturb the rhythm of this under-world.

The Athenian metro as a spatial condition blazons abroad the authority of the clean. It recalls the lust for order. And it has, admittedly, strong tools to succeed in so doing: From the carefully picked glassy materials to their frantic, constant cleaning, from security units to the closed circuit surveillance system, the metro enunciates its operation under terms of total order, terms of social peace and obedience. The use of the terrorist threat from the part of its administrative authorities offers the pretext for an operation based upon a culture of fear. Death, after all, always awaits and its subtle presence will design the spatial forms as much as the actions that the latter will allow for. The terrorist threat jumps straight to the heart of the bio-political condition. The metro, as a universal urban phenomenon, has time and time again been picked as a target of political attacks; essentially, these are attacks on its very biological content: the accumulation, in other words, of life in this underground bowel. It is this selection that highlights the bio-political façade of the metro and it is this very façade that the Athenian example is also meant to secure and organise.

The starting and ending point of this organising process is the demand for cleanliness and purity - for clean use, for clean (dis-)embarking, for clear thoroughfare. The metro lies precisely at the conjuncture between discipline and the bio-political example, where the need for strict control of the bodily position is replaced by the need for control of population flows, some flows demanding clear thoroughfares. It is the mobility of the crowd, then, that ought to remain clear - it is this very crowd that is called to inscribe the demand for order. For this reason statutory positions are to be avoided. Swift passing through becomes a duty of the crowd, some duty fulfilled as a clear-cut movement in a permanently clean space built around fear of the statutory and the always dangerous underground conditions. Cleanliness there exists as substance, as a tireless reminder that everything works according to plan, that everything is in order. Marc Augé's notion of non-place brings to mind precisely such a spatio-timely condition. It concerns spaces with identities lacking continuity: spaces there are non-historical, non-correlative, where time is in a condition of permanent acceleration.

What distinguishes the temporary users-residents of the non-place is the common feeling of loneliness, a social impossibility perhaps aptly described by the constant

reminder of their brutal and threatened naked biological nature, their existence in a state of bestial fear.

Therefore, what unites the temporary cohabitants of a station or a carriage is the fact of their very own biological existence; the reality, in other words, that they are biologically human - the human hereby understood as a biological essence fulfilling its transportation needs. The humans, in other words, striped of their biological context - not merely their social characteristics but also, as we saw, of a series of biological functions. The human, then, habiting the metro's condition is one of a particular biological context. This is a human that projects at its public appearance elements of another select social behaviour, who obeys the rules and legal frameworks of the non-place hosting them. Cleanliness is once again here to evaporate marks of use, to delete any elements deranging the geometrical and spatial order that set forms and rules have co-shaped. Clean space expresses spaces that have no internal processes - non-historical, non-anthropological spaces.

The space consistently projected without a social context is no other than the space that ought to eliminate all actions materially and socially capable of damaging it. Such space is therefore a space that denies its social involvement and comprises a

naked form, a spatial condition outright identifying with its strictly spatial characteristics and rules guaranteeing its operational integrity. Cleanliness coordinates the naked exposition of space (bare of historical marks of use and of social actions) as much as the naked exposition of the temporary user (bare of social characteristics and damaging biological functions). The metro needs to remain clean and for this reason the legal framework of its functioning ought to exclude 'law-breaking' attitudes. Clean space equals clean, uninterrupted transportation.

In many ways such a condition brings to mind the condition of the concentration camp. It recalls the spatial condition politically organising the confinement of a (questionable) biological specificity. This specificity, in the case of the metro, is not identified solely in the presence of a bodily-organic movement or its normalisation but also in the concurrent absence of some biological needs and the continuous effort for their systemic exclusion. In a way the spatio-timely condition of the metro includes a biological negative, a specialised biological machine. In this sense it comprises a space of exclusion, a part that sets itself outside normal order, a spatio-legal condition under which laws and rules suspend biological human 'rights'. Within it, then, characteristics of the biological body comprise crucial political

criteria in deciding how such an infrastructure will bring together its functions. In Agamben's study of the concentration camp the state of exception means the suspension of political rights and the subsequent emergence of the biological dimension as a political regulator of this condition of confinement. In the case of the Athenian metro the respective state of exception signals the suspension of biological rights and the emergence of such suspension as a regulator for this underground reality. The uninterrupted thoroughfare and the mute sojourn of the metro user ought to pay for the biological gap created by the aforementioned suspension: A suspension asked to build itself amidst a state of constant self-repression. I am human because I move; for no other biological or socio-political reason. Movement organises the functioning of the metro and capitalist production organises this movement in turn... and it is cleanliness that will define the safe conditions of such organising. The clean metro is, first and foremost, a mechanism of discipline; it is a vehicle for education of the urban ways, it is in the end a way to exist, a way to live...

Agamben, G. (1998): *"Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life"*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

Auge, M. (1995): *"Non-Places – Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity"*, London: Verso

Douglas, M. (1966): *"Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo"*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Elias, N. (1985): *"The Loneliness of the Dying"*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Sontag, S. (2001): *"Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors"*, New York: Picador



FOOD NOT BOMBS

London - NOVEMBER 23RD - 24TH

SASKIA,
MY FRIEND
WHO TOOK ME
ON THE
FOOD NOT
BOMBS TOUR...



FOOD NOT BOMBS IS A PRETTY SIMPLE
CONCEPT AS FAR AS I UNDERSTAND IT:
TAKE SURPLUS FOOD, COOK IT & GIVE
IT AWAY FREE TO ANYONE WHO'S
HUNGRY.

THERE'S A REGULAR FOOD NOT BOMBS
EVERY SATURDAY IN E. LONDON AT ALTA
ALI PARK.

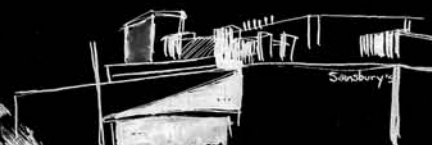
THIS IS AN ATTEMPT AT A SMALL SNAP-
SHOT OF ALL THE WORK THAT GOES INTO
MAKING THE EVENT HAPPEN...

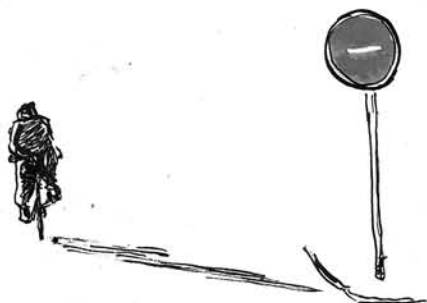
FRIDAY 23RD

NEW COVENT GARDEN MARKET

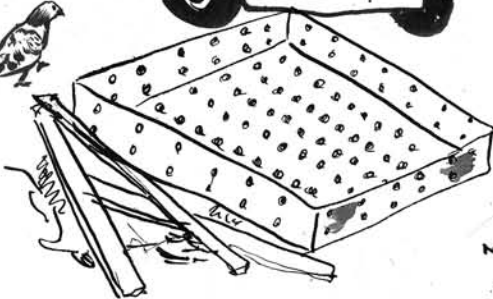
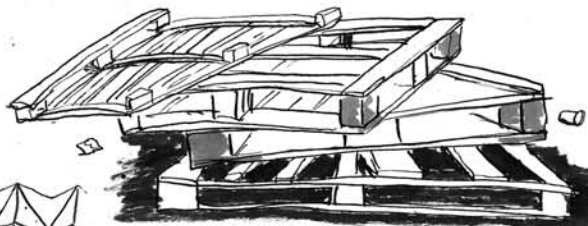
OUR FIRST PORT OF CALL & WHERE WE HOPED
TO FIND MOST OF THE FOOD. BASED JUST SOUTH
OF THE THAMES NEAR BATTERSEA POWER STATION
NEW COVENT GARDEN MARKET (NCGM) IS A
WHOLESALE FRUIT & VEG MARKET, WHICH PRODUCES
AN ABUNDANCE OF SURPLUS FOOD.

NORMALLY IT'S A FREE
FOOD PARADISE...





UNFORTUNATELY SASKIA & I ARE LATE!
WE'RE CONFRONTED WITH ROW UPON ROW OF
EMPTY PALETTES, SHUTTERED SHOPS & FORK-
LIFTS ABANDONED FOR THE DAY...



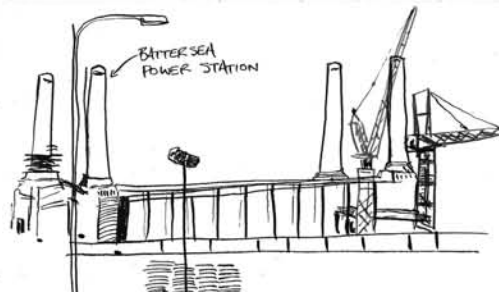
NEW COVENT GARDEN
MARKET WORKS ON A TIME-
CLOCK THAT HURTS MY HEAD...

STARTING AT 5AM BY 11AM, EXCEPT FOR THE WORKERS
TIDYING UP, EVERYONE ELSE IS GONE. WE'VE ARR-
IVED CLOSE TO MIDDAY SO NOT ONLY HAVE WE
MISSED THE MARKET BUT WE SEEM TO HAVE MISSED
THE SURPLUS FOOD TOO.

AFTER REMONSTRATING ABOUT BEING LATE (IT WAS
MY FAULT FOR TAKING US ON A 'QUICKER' BIKE ROUTE)
WE DECIDE TO EXPLORE THE MARKET'S CENTRAL
AVENUE FIRST; IT'S THE LARGEST & NORMALLY

HAS THE MOST FOOD AT THE END OF
THE TRADERS' DAY. AND IT
LEAVES US 3 OTHER AVENUES TO
EXPLORE IF THERE'S NOTHING
ALONG THE CENTRAL ONE...

OTHER PEOPLE
SKIPPING FOOD





WE ~~STUMBLE~~ SPOT A COUPLE OF OTHER FOOD NOT BOMBS PEOPLE. THEY'D HAD MORE LUCK THAN US & POINT US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

"NO YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING IN TOTALLY THE WRONG PLACE"

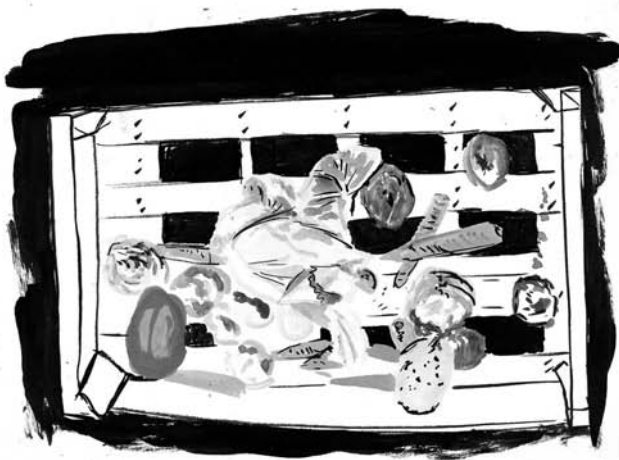
WE STUMBLE ACROSS A HUGE DUMPSTER FULL OF BANANAS, PEPPERS & ONIONS. THE NUMBER OF BANANAS IS INSANE! IT'D TAKE ME OVER A YEAR TO EAT THEM ALL... WE STARTED FILLING OUR BAGS FULL OF FOOD.



MOVING FURTHER ALONG THE AVENUE WE WERE CONFRONTED WITH AN OCEAN OF BOXES. EVERY SIZE, SHAPE, COLOUR & HUE IS PRESENT. AND BURIED IN EACH BOX IS A MULTITUDE OF FRESH VEG & FRUIT. SIFTING THROUGH THE BOXES PRODUCES AN ARRAY OF SURPRISES (WHY, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE THERE THREE PEELED NEW POTATOES.?)

"DUDE, WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS IS?!"





AN HOUR LATER, MAYBE MORE, WE'RE FULLY LADEN. WE'D BOUGHT TWO PANNIERS, SEVERAL BOXES & TWO BACKPACKS ALL OF WHICH GROANED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF FOOD.

ACTUALLY IT TURNED OUT WE ^{OVER}UNDER-ESTIMATED WHAT WE COULD CARRY: HALF WAY HOME MY BIKE RACK ALMOST COLLAPSED. AFTER A QUICK BODGE JOB WHERE ITS FIRMLY STRAPPED TO THE FRAME IT SPENDS THE REST OF THE JOURNEY SWAYING PRECARIOUSLY & MOANING ABOUT THE BURDEN. STILL, AS FAR AS FOOD GATHERING GOES IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL HAUL!

SATURDAY 24TH → RAMPART SOCIAL CENTRE & ALTAB ALI PARK



RAMPART IS A SOCIAL CENTRE ~~OFF~~ COMMERCIAL ROAD WHERE THE EAST LONDON FOOD NOT BOMBS PREPARE THEIR FOOD. AT THE MOMENT RAMPART IS LONDON'S LONGEST RUNNING SQUATTED SOCIAL CENTRE HAVING BEEN OPEN SINCE MAY 2004. AS WELL AS FNB COOKING THE SPACE HOSTS MEETINGS, REHEARSALS, WORKSHOPS, FILM SCREENINGS, BENEFIT GIGS & OTHER RADICAL HAPPENINGS.

WHEN WE GET TO RAMPART THE SPACE IS BUSTLING WITH PEOPLE PEELING, CUTTING & COOKING FOOD FOR THE FOOD NOT BOMBS. WE'VE ARRIVED LATE AGAIN. STILL THE FOOD WE'RE CARRYING SEEMS TO BE A USEFUL ADDITION, THOUGH OTHERS CLEARLY FOUND THE SAME STASH OF BANANAS...

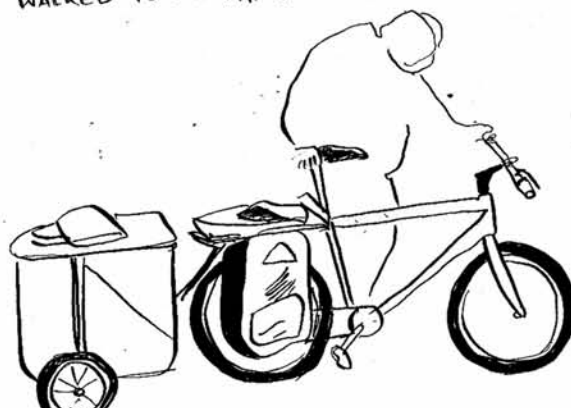


COOKING'S ALWAYS SOCIAL BUT THE FOOD NOT BOMBS TODAY HUMMED WITH CONVERSATION. PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT THEIR BACKGROUNDS, DIFFERENT CITIES THEY'D VISITED & SOME OF THE ADVENTURES THEY'D EXPERIENCED. A WHOLE VARIETY OF PEOPLE WERE HELPING OUT FROM VARIOUS CORNERS OF EUROPE, THE AMERICAS & THE MIDDLE EAST.

THERE WERE HEATED DEBATES ABOUT VEGANISM (INEVITABLY!), STRAIGHT-EDGE (SURPRISINGLY?) & THE MERITS OF ILLUSTRATION (I THINK I STARTED THAT ONE). I ALSO ENDED UP HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH A MID-WEST AMERICAN GUY ABOUT ZINES & DISCOVERED ANOTHER PERSON WHO WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ZINE I MAKE.



WE'VE GOT TO GET THE FOOD TO THE PARK FOR 2PM: THE ADVERTISED START TIME OF FOOD NOT BOMBS. ITS A TIGHT SCHEDULE THOUGH IT DOESN'T SEEM TO UNDULY FAZE ANYONE. BY 1:30PM NEAR ENOUGH EVERYTHING'S READY. A BIKE & TRAILER ARE LOADED UP WITH FOOD, CROCKERY & A TABLE. OTHER PEOPLE CARRY INDIVIDUAL DISHES. I END-UP WITH THE BREAD, WHICH SUITS ME FINE, THOUGH I MANAGED TO RESIST SNACKING ON IT AS I WALKED TO THE PARK.



ONCE IN THE PARK THE TABLES WERE
SET UP, A BANNER WENT UP & PEOPLE WE ALL
STOOD WAITING FOR SOME PEOPLE TO
COME EAT.

ENTRANCE
TO ALTAB ALI
PARK.

FOOD NOT
BOMBS



IT STARTED SLOWLY
BUT AFTER A WHILE
CLUSTERS OF PEOPLE
STARTED APPEARING TO EAT
THE FOOD.

DESPITE BEING CHILLY THE MOOD WAS CELEBRATORY!
WITH SMILES & JOKES (QUITE OFTEN ABOUT THE FACT
THE FOOD WAS VEGAN).

A WHOLE LOAD OF WORK WENT INTO
MAKING FNB HAPPEN (SEVERAL PEOPLE
SPENDING FRIDAY SKIPPING & EVEN
MORE PEOPLE COOKING ON SATURDAY)

BUT ONCE THE FOOD WAS SERVED IT ALL
SEEMED WORTH IT.

I HAPPILY TUCKED INTO MY FOOD & GUILTYLY LEFT
BEFORE IT WAS TIME TO TIDY UP!

MORE INFO: LONDONFNB@LISTS.RISEUP.NET

OR WWW.FOODNOTBOMBS.NET/ENGLAND.HTML



Culture in a Globalized City

By Zygmunt Bauman

Cities, and particularly mega-cities like London, are the dustbins into which problems produced by globalization are dumped. They are also laboratories in which the art of living with those problems (though not of resolving them) is experimented with, put to the test, and (hopefully, hopefully...) developed. Most seminal impacts of globalization (above all, the divorce of power from politics, and the shifting of functions once undertaken by political authorities sideways, to the markets, and downward, to individual life-politics) have been by now thoroughly investigated and described in great detail. I will confine myself therefore to one aspect of the globalization process – too seldom considered in connection with the paradigmatic change in the study and theory of culture: namely, the changing patterns of global migration.

Zygmunt Bauman is one of the most prolific and important sociologists today, having published approximately thirty books and over one hundred articles. His foci of interest include, amongst others, globalization, modernity/ post-modernity, consumerism and morality. *"Culture in a Globalised City"* is his kind contribution to the present issue of *Occupied London*.

There were three different phases in the history of modern-era migration.

The first wave of migration followed the logic of the tri-partite syndrome: territoriality of sovereignty, 'rooted' identity, gardening posture (subsequently referred to, for the sake of brevity, as TRG). That was the emigration from the 'modernized' centre (read: the site of order-building and economic-progress - the two main industries turning out, and off, the growing numbers of 'wasted humans'), partly exportation and partly eviction of up to 60 million people, a huge amount by nineteenth century standards, to 'empty lands' (read: lands whose native population could be struck off the 'modernized' calculations; be literally uncounted and unaccounted for, presumed either non-existent or irrelevant). Native residues still alive after massive slaughters and massive epidemics, have been proclaimed by the settlers the objects of 'white man's civilizing mission'.

The second wave of migration could be best modelled as an 'Empire emigrates back' case. With dismantling of colonial empires, a number of

indigenous people in various stages of their 'cultural advancement' followed their colonial superiors to the metropolis. Upon arrival, they were cast in the only worldview-strategic mould available: one constructed and practiced earlier in the nation-building era to deal with the categories earmarked for 'assimilation' – a process aimed at the annihilation of cultural difference, casting the 'minorities' at the receiving end of crusades, Kulturkämpfe and proselytizing missions (currently renamed, in the name of 'political correctness', as 'citizenship education' aimed at 'integration'). This story is not yet finished: time and again, its echoes reverberate in the declarations of intent of the politicians who notoriously tend to follow the habits of Minerva's Owl known to spread its wings by the end of the day. As the first phase of migration, the drama of the 'empire migrating back' is tried, though in vain, to be squeezed into the frame of the now outdated TRG syndrome.

The third wave of modern migration, now in full force and still gathering

momentum, leads into the age of diasporas: a world-wide archipelago of ethnic/ religious/ linguistic settlements - oblivious to the trails blazed and paved by the imperialist-colonial episode and following instead the globalization-induced logic of the planetary redistribution of life resources. Diasporas are scattered, diffused, extend over many nominally sovereign territories, ignore territorial claims to the supremacy of local demands and obligation, are locked in the double (or multiple) bind of 'dual (or multiple) nationality' and dual (or multiple) loyalty. The present-day migration differs from the two previous phases by moving both ways (virtually all countries, including Britain, are nowadays both 'immigrant' or 'emigrant'), and privileging no routes (routes are no longer determined by the imperial/ colonial links of the past). It differs also in exploding the old TRG syndrome and replacing it with a EAH one (extraterritoriality, 'anchors' displacing the 'roots' as primary tools of identification, hunting strategy).

The new migration casts a question mark upon the bond between identity and citizenship, individual and place, neighbourhood and belonging. Jonathan Rutherford, acute and insightful observer of the fast changing frames of human togetherness,

notes that the residents of the London street on which he lives form a neighbourhood of different communities, some with networks extending only to the next street, others which stretch across the world. It is a neighbourhood of porous boundaries in which it is difficult to identify who belongs and who is an outsider. What is it we belong to in this locality? What is it that each of us calls home and, when we think back and remember how we arrived here, what stories do we share?

Living like the rest of us (or most of that rest) in a diaspora (how far stretching, and in what direction(s)?) among diasporas (how far stretching and in what direction(s)?) has for the first time forced on the agenda the issue of 'art of living with a difference' - which may appear on the agenda only once the difference is no longer seen as a merely temporary irritant, and so unlike in the past urgently requiring arts, skills, teaching and learning. The idea of 'human rights', promoted in the EAH setting to replace/complement the TRG institution of territorially determined citizenship, translates today as the 'right to remain different'. By fits and starts, that new rendition of the human-rights idea sediments, at best, tolerance; it has as yet to start in earnest to sediment solidarity. And it is a moot question whether it is fit

to conceive group solidarity in any other form than that of the fickle and fray, predominantly virtual 'networks', galvanized and continually re-modelled by the interplay of individual connecting and disconnecting, making calls and declining to reply them.

The new rendition of the human-rights idea disassembles hierarchies and tears apart the imagery of upward ('progressive') 'cultural evolution'. Forms of life float, meet, clash, crash, catch hold of each other, merge and hive off with (to paraphrase Georg Simmel) equal specific gravity. Steady and stolid hierarchies and evolutionary lines are replaced with interminable and endemically inconclusive battles of recognition; at the utmost, with eminently renegotiable pecking orders. Imitating Archimedes, reputed to insist (probably with a kind of desperation which only an utter nebulousness of the project might cause) that he would turn the world upside down if only given a solid enough fulcrum, we may say that we would tell who is to assimilate to whom, whose dissimilarity/ idiosyncrasy is destined for a chop and whose is to emerge on top, if we only were given a hierarchy of cultures. Well, we are not given it, and unlikely to be given soon.

We may say that culture is in its liquid-modern phase made to the measure of



(willingly pursued, or endured as obligatory) individual freedom of choice. And that it is meant to service such freedom. And that it is meant to see to it that the choice remains unavoidable: a life necessity, and a duty. And that responsibility, the inalienable companion of free choice, stays where liquid-modern condition forced it: on the shoulders of the individual, now appointed the sole manager of 'life politics'.

Today's culture consists of offerings, not norms. As already noted by Pierre Bourdieu, culture lives by seduction, not normative regulation; PR, not policing;

creating new needs/desires/wants, not coercion. This society of ours is a society of consumers, and just as the rest of the world as-seen-and-lived by consumers, culture turns into a warehouse of meant-for-consumption products – each vying for the shifting/drifted attention of prospective consumers in the hope to attract it and hold for a bit longer than a fleeting moment. Abandoning stiff standards, indulging indiscrimination, serving all tastes while privileging none, encouraging fitfulness and ‘flexibility’ (politically correct name of spinelessness) and romanticizing unsteadiness and inconsistency is therefore the ‘right’ (the only reasonable?) strategy to follow; fastidiousness, raising brows, stiffening upper lips are not recommended. The TV reviewer/critic of a pattern-and-style setting daily praised the New Year’s Eve 2007/8 broadcast for promising ‘to provide an array of musical entertainment guaranteed to sate everyone’s appetite’. *‘The good thing’* about it, he explained, *‘is that its universal appeal means you can dip in and out of the show depending on your preferences’*. A commendable and indeed a seemly quality in a society in which networks replace structures, whereas the attachment/detachment game and an unending procession of connections and disconnections replace ‘determining’ and ‘fixing’.

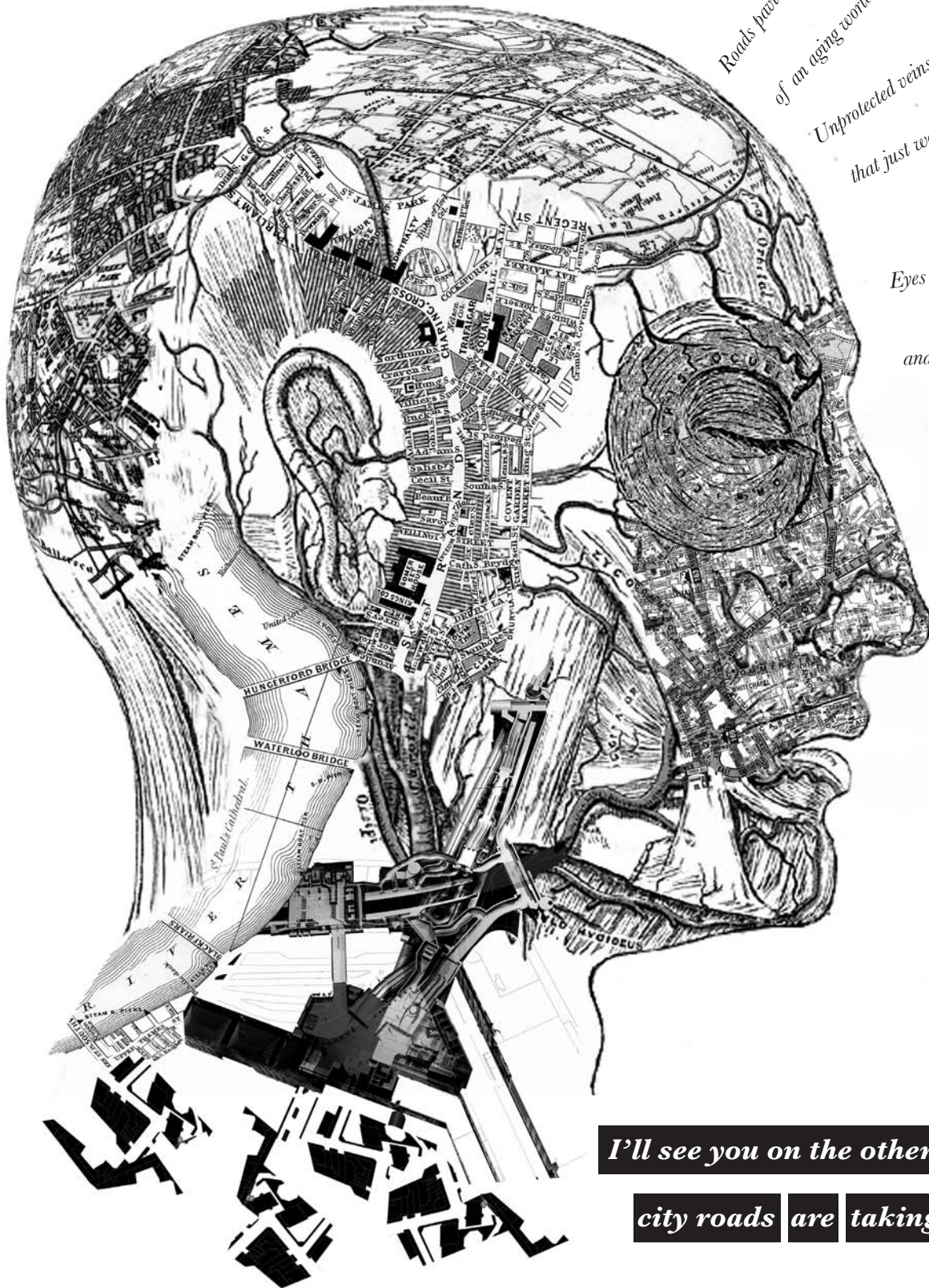
The current phase of the

graduated transformation of the idea of ‘culture’ from its original Enlightenment-inspired form to its liquid-modern reincarnation is prompted and operated by the same forces that promote emancipation of the markets from the remaining constraints of non-economic nature – the social, political, and ethical constraints among them. In pursuing its own emancipation, liquid-modern consumer-focused economy relies on the excess of offers, their accelerated ageing, and quick dissipation of their seductive power – which, by the way, makes it an economy of profligacy and waste. Since there is no knowing in advance which of the offers may prove tempting enough to stimulate consuming desire, the only way to find out leads through trials and costly errors. Continuous supply of new offers, and a constantly growing volume of goods on offer, are also necessary to keep circulation of goods rapid and the desire to replace them with ‘new and improved’ goods constantly refreshed – as well as to prevent the consumer dissatisfaction with individual products from condensing into the general disaffection with consumerist mode of life as such.

Culture is turning now into one of the departments in the *‘all you need and might dream off’* department store in which the world inhabited by consumers

has turned. Like in other departments of that store, the shelves are tightly packed with daily restocked commodities, while the counters are adorned with the commercials of latest offers destined to disappear soon together with the attractions they advertise. Commodities and commercials alike are calculated to arouse desires and trigger wishes (as George Steiner famously put it – *‘for maximum impact and instant obsolescence’*). Their merchants and copywriters count on the wedding of the seductive power of offers with the ingrained ‘oneupmanship’ and ‘getting an edge’ urges of their prospective customers.

Liquid-modern culture, unlike the culture of the nation-building era, has no ‘people’ to ‘cultivate’. It has instead the clients to seduce. And unlike its ‘solid modern’ predecessor, it no longer wishes to work itself, eventually but the sooner the better, out of job. Its job is now to render its own survival permanent – through temporalizing all aspects of life of its former wards, now reborn as its clients._



*Roads paving lines on the face
of an aging world*

*Unprotected veins running around ears
that just won't listen.*

Eyes shut, his last defense

and a denial

to see

what is to come.

I'll see you on the other side;

city roads are taking us there .

Translating these 20 theses presents difficulties not only linguistically, where there are many neologisms and lexical challenges, but above all culturally mediating from a continental European political context into a distant anglophone reality. Here, and in the footnotes, are a few indications for better understanding this text. In general, the relatively short nature of each thesis and the provocative, almost prophetic tone in which they are written lends itself to thoughtful interpretation, similar to reading the combination of a declaration of war and Buddhist meditation haikus. This should not in any way be understood as a definitive political doctrine. Placing this document in the current political context, it is intended to interact with the reader in such a way as to encourage discussion and debate. Where possible, the original terminology has been maintained, even to the extent of creating

neologisms, as well as adding a few short notes to aid in its comprehension. Likewise, we have also included a handful of citations for some of the more continentally specific events that an anglophone reader might not be aware of. There are a few terms and concepts that run throughout the entire piece but that are never fully explained. Again, this is probably due to a different assumption of the (European) reader's prior knowledge. First and

foremost are the numerous references to an Empire and the subsequent lexicon are strongly connected to Michael Hardt and Antoni Negri's work of the same title, *Empire*. It is strongly suggested further reading. Another important concept, one that is continually developed throughout the text, is that of the Common, which can be understood as a re-proposal of the English 16th century Commons: communal land worked and maintained protecting it from privatization. Historically, commons were eventually expropriated from the peasant population by the state. Today this idea is gaining ground in European circles as a possible form of resistance in the contemporary globalized sociopolitical context. Lastly, and maybe most importantly, there is the idea of the *biopolitical* and, consequently, *biopower*. The biopolitical is based on the understanding that all of life, all actions and choices, are inherently political. There is no distinction between public and personal whereas social structures are constructed first and foremost by interpersonal relations. This does not imply, however, that these personal interactions are not constituted and governed by deeper common structures; inversely, the biopolitical is the very sense of these more complex structures *acting through* our single choices. Hence *biopower* is the accumulation of biopolitical energy into a hegemonic system, or what we iden-

tify as that which governs, over and from within, in the Imperial order.

In the hopes that the reader can find some critical stimulus in this text, we humbly extend our contribution to the global collective resistance.

See you on the barricades.

20 Theses on the Subversion of the Metropolis

Thesis 1

We define the metropolis as the compact group of territories and heterogeneous devices crossed in every point by a disjunctive synthesis; there is not any point of the metropolis, in fact, where command and resistance, dominion and sabotage are not present at the same time. An antagonistic process between two parts, whose relation consists in enmity, totally innervates the metropolis. On one side, it consists, true to its etymology, in the exercising of a command that is irradiated on all the other territories – so everywhere is *of the* metropolis.¹ It is the space in which and from which the intensity and the concentration of devices of oppression, exploitation and dominion express themselves in their maximum degree and extension. In the metropolis, the city and the country, modernity and second natures collapse and *end*. In the metropolis where industry, communication and spectacle make a productive whole, the government's required job consists in connecting and controlling the social cooperation which is at the base to then be able to extract surplus value using biopolitical instruments. On the other side, it is a whole of the territories in which a heterogeneous mix of subversive forces – singular, Common, collective – are able to express the tendentially more *organized and horizontal* level of antagonism against command. There are not places and non-places in the metropolis: there are territories occupied militarily by the imperial forces, territories controlled by biopower and territories that enter into resistance. Sometimes, very often, these three types of territories cross one another, other times the latter separates itself from the other two and, in yet other occasions, the last enters into war against the first two. The Banlieue is emblematic of this “*third*” territory: but if everywhere is *of the* metropolis, then it's also true that everywhere is *of the* Banlieue.² In the metropolitan extension of Common life, the intensity of the revolutionary imagination of communism-to-come lives.

Thesis 2

In the metropolitan struggles, the *biopolitical strike* defines the principle articulation of the attack strategy that the irreconcilable forms-of-life take against the metropolis of command. Today, the refusal of work cannot be other than the refusal to concede pieces of life, fragments of affections and shreds of knowledge to cybernetic capitalism. Today, struggle against capitalism is the direct removal of bodies from exploitation and attacking revenue, guerrilla warfare against gentrification and violent appropriation of the Common, sabotage of the control devices and destabilization of political and social representation. Likewise, and just as direct, is the wild experimentation in the forms-of-life, liberation of affections, construction of communities, inoculation of happiness and dynamic expansion of desires. Just as bodies – in as much singularity as in population – are the target of the *biopolitical police* and exploitation, it is only starting from the singularity of bodies that every human, biopolitical, general strike against the metropolis starts: it is in the singularity as form-of-life that holds the Ungovernability that resists biopower. Capitalist initiative can be anticipated, at least if diffused singular refusal is accompanied by the decision to build a metropolitan organization of autonomous groups able to bring the rebel forms-of-life to become an insurgent multitude. When singularities rise up as a Common body, the Ungovernable can become revolutionary process.

¹In the original Italian text “*della metropoli*” here plays on what would usually be “*nella metropoli*” or literally “*in the metropolis*”. Taking an alternate approach, the sense could also be rendered in English using “*belongs to the metropolis*”.

²In reference to the minority dense suburbs of Paris, where over the last few years numerous volatile situations have systematically erupted.

Thesis 3

The *blocking* tactic is essential to the effectiveness of the biopolitical strike when it is seriously done in the metropolis, which is to say when it exceeds specificity and extends everywhere as a paralysis of control, a circulation block, a counterbehavioral virus, a suspension of production and reproduction, an interruption of the communication factory. In other words: impeding the normal course of capitalist valorization. Through blocks it is possible to recognize the generalized nature of the biopolitical strike. The *piqueteros* of Buenos Aires³ and the insurgence against the CPE in France⁴ highlighted the force and the capacity of organization. Blocks are material signs of the secession of capital and biopower. Every metropolitan block opens *other* roads, *other* passages, *other* lives: the metropolitan block is necessary for the construction and the defense of the exodus.

Thesis 4

Sabotage responds to the necessity of unifying government destabilization to command deconstruction and thus reinforces the metropolitan blocks. It intervenes on different levels in metropolitan life: from the anonymous singularity that slows the rhythm of value production- circulation to the punctual and devastating intervention of a declared conflict. In the first case, it is a spontaneous, diffused, anti-work behavior, in the second it is subversive intelligence that diagonally interrupts conflict mediation in the governmentability. The subversive science of the metropolis is therefore also defined as the science of sabotage.

Thesis 5

When the biopolitical strike, sabotage and blocking converge the presuppositions for metropolitan revolt are created between them. Metropolitan insurrection becomes possible when the chaining together of specific struggles and the accumulation of revolts make a comprehensive strategy that hits (or overtakes) territories, existences, machines and devices.

Thesis 6

Social centers,⁵ liberated spaces, houses and communized territories, should be to the political critique of the multitudes and transformed into new Mutual Aid Societies. Just as between the 18th and 19th centuries, these territorial aggregations could provide not only solidarity between individuals, mutuality between forms-of-life and organization for both specific and general struggles, but also to the singularity's and the community's texture of conscience in that they are both oppressed and exploited. The Common, as a political act, is therefore born as a process in which the friendship and mutuality between those who are deprived transforms itself into a resistance commune. Today, every socialized space can become that place in which an autonomous organization in and against the metropolis is condensed from their rebellious intensity. Temps, workers, gays, students, women, lesbians, teachers, immigrants, queers, children – everyday singularities must be able to refer to these spaces to create revolutionary forms-of-life and organize themselves in so that they are unassailable by the biopolitical police. Common elements – like mutual aid funds, minor knowledges, shared housing, community gardens and parks, autonomous

³ The *piqueteros* movement was an important factor in the post-economic collapse of Argentina in 2001. The english picket line was adopted but with an additional emphasis on the impermeability of the block.

⁴ idem

⁵ In Italian, "*centro sociale*" specifically refers to type of squat, or occupied abandoned spaces that are converted into self-run collective projects. There are as many variations as there are examples throughout Italian territory, including concert halls, libraries, restaurants, pubs, etc..

production and reproduction tools, passions and affections – should be salvaged, invented, built, and be available to all those who decide to enter into resistance, on strike, or in revolt. The sum of all of these elements will compose, territory by territory, the Commons of the 21st century.

Thesis 7

The only security to which non submissive forms-of-life aspire is the end of oppression and exploitation. The material and ethical poverty that the biopower constrains millions of men and women to is the source of the insecurity that reigns in the metropolis and governs over the population. Against this, we can't fall into the loophole of *asking* for rights, which means *more government* and therefore non-liberty: the only Common law is created and determined through its revolutionary exercise. Every desire, every need that the forms-of-life of the multitudes are able to express are in their right. In doing so, they lay *the law*.⁶

Thesis 8

Without *rupture* there is no possibility of bringing the escape routes beyond command. Every rupture corresponds to a declaration of war by the rebel forms-of-life against the metropolitan Empire: remember Genoa 2001.⁷ In the metropolis, an asymmetry between biopower and forms-of-life rules, but it is exactly this asymmetry that can become a fundamental weapon in metropolitan guerrilla warfare: the impact between forms-of-life and command creates an excess and, when it is expressed with force and strength, can become revolutionary organization of Common life.

Thesis 9

In the metropolis, the articulation and the linking of different forces and not mediation is what pushes their intensity to drive the game of subversive alliances. The construction and the effectuation of the Rostock revolt, against 2007's G8, showed the potency of this "game."⁸ Autonomy, as a strategic indication for the succession from biopower, means the political metropolitan composition of all of the becoming-minor into a becoming-Common, a horizontal proliferation of counter-behaviors dislocated on a single plane of consistence without ever producing a transcendent *unit*. In the metropolis there is no revolutionary Subject: there is a plane of consistence of subversion that brings each singularity to choose its *part*.

Thesis 10

The important *part* of every social metropolitan movement is found in the excess which it produces.

Thesis 11

Without a shared language, there is never any possibility of sharing any sort of wealth. Common language is constructed only in and by struggles.

Thesis 12

One of biggest dangers for the autonomous forms-of-life is indulgence in the *technical* separation between life and politics, between managing the existent and subversion, between goods and Common

⁶ The Italian "*diritto*" has the double meaning of both "*right*" (as in a civil right) and "*law*". Obviously, law here is not intended to mean some legal procedure but what could be called a Common right.

⁷ The mobilizations against the G8 summit of 2001 in Genoa.

⁸ The Rostock demonstrations were characterized by a veritable mixing of the plurality of varied groups, and the adopting a much more fluid form in respect the usual "bloc" formations. The result was a colorful mass of different tactical expressions that was extremely difficult for the law enforcement bodies to counter. Excess, in all of its forms, is the expression a struggle's truth. What remains after every struggle is always a Common truth.

use, between enunciation and material truth, between ethics and blind activism for its own sake. The confusion between what is Common and what is held in property, in individualism and in cynicism, should be defeated in practice, which is to say through an ethic of the Common forged in conflict. The personal is biopolitical, politics are impersonal.

Thesis 13

The metropolitan architectures of autonomy are *all* horizontal. As such, they adhere to the form-of-organization in all of their constitutive political stances and vice versa. Those of power, in *every* form and *everywhere* it is present, are *all* vertical and that is how they separate individuals from the Common. These architectures are to be deserted, surrounded, neutralized and, when it is possible, attacked and destroyed. The only possible hierarchy in metropolitan autonomy is in the clash with dominion.

Thesis 14

The form-of-organization, in the present historical conditions, cannot be other than the form-of-life. It is non-normative regulation of the Common for the Common. Here discipline does not mean other than the Common organization of indiscipline. The form-of-organization is the plane of consistency on which individuals and multitudes, affections and perceptions, reproduction tools and desires, gangs of friends and indocile artists, arms and knowledge, loves and sadnesses circulate: a multitude of fluxes that enter in a political composition that permits everyone's power to grow while, at the same time, diminishes that of the adversary.

Thesis 15

In the metropolis, individuals are only the bodily reflection of biopower, whereas singularities are the only living *presences* capable of becoming. Singularities love and hate while individuals are unable to live these passions if not through the mediation of the spectacle in such a way that they are governed and neutralized even before being able to arrive to the *presence*. The individual is the base unit for biopower whereas the singularity is the minimum unit from which every practice of liberty can begin. The individual is the enemy of the singularity. The singularity is the most Common we can be.

Thesis 16

The moment has come to put the category of "citizenship", the heredity of an urban modernity that doesn't exist in anywhere, into discussion. In the metropolis, being a citizen means simply reentering in the biopolitical job of governmentability, seconding the "legality" of a State, of a Nation and of a Republic that doesn't exist if not only as ganglion of the Empire's organized repression. The singularity exceeds citizenship. Vindicating one's own singularity against citizenship is the slogan that, for example, migrants write daily with their blood on the Mediterranean coasts, in the CPT in revolt,⁹ on the wall of steel that divides Tijuana from San Diego or on the membrane of flesh and cement that separates the Rom bidonvilles¹⁰ from the shamefully sparkling City Center. Citizenship has become the award for faithful allegiance to the imperial order. The singularity, as soon as it can, happily does without it. Only the singularity can destroy the walls, borders, membranes and limits constructed as the infrastructure of dominion by biopower.

⁹"Centro di Permanenza Temporanea" literally translated would be "Temporary stay center" which is quite misleading: CPT are prison structures used to hold people caught without stay permits, usually destined for deportation.

¹⁰A bidonville is a small area, usually in abandoned areas of a city, where a migrant Rom population lives, quite similar to migrant camps found in the US.

Thesis 17

Just as capitalist revenue parasitically exploits metropolitan social cooperation, *politics* coincides with the parasitic revenue of the government on the multitude's forms-of-life: violent or "democratic" extortion of consensus, the privately public use of the Common, and the abusive exercise of an empty sovereignty over society are the ways that political revenue fattens itself in the shade of the global capital skyscrapers. In the metropolis, only *the political* remains as a possibility of exercising the Common and multitudinarian deadline for its appropriation. One should never *do some politics*, if to reach the "point of no return". *Politics* are always a form of government. *The political* is, sometimes, revolutionary.

Thesis 18

The biopolitical metropolis is administrated exclusively using *governance*. Social movements, autonomous forces and all those who truly have the desire to subvert the status quo understand that when a struggle begins one should never commit the fatal error of going straight to negotiate with *governance*, sit at its "tables", accept *its* forms of corruption and thus become *its* hostage. On the contrary, it is necessary right from the beginning to impose the battleground, the deadlines and even the modality of struggle on *governance*. Only when the balance of power is overturned in favor of the metropolitan autonomy will it be possible to negotiate *governance's* surrender while standing up, on solid legs. The extraordinary insurgence of Copenhagen¹¹ demonstrates that which is possible, if only one has the courage to take the initiative and persevere as oneself.

Thesis 19

In the metropolis, just as work has become superfluous, paradoxically, everyone has to work *all the time*, intensively, from the cradle to the grave and maybe beyond; evidently the compulsion to work is evermore obviously a political obligation inflicted upon the population so they will be docile and obedient, serially productive of goods and individually occupied in the production in and of themselves as imperial subjects. We vindicate the refusal of work and the creation of other forms of production and reproduction of life that are not burdened under salary's yoke, that are not even linguistically definable by capital, that start and finish with and in the Common. Guaranteed metropolitan income can become a Common fact only when the practices of appropriation and the extension of autonomy over the territory massively impose a new balance of power. Until that moment, it's probable that it will instead be – as, for example, what happens in the local and regional proposals of a so called "citizenship income" – another passage in the fragmentation of the Common and in the hierarchy of the forms-of-life. Moreover, as the autonomous experiences of the '60s and '70s have taught us, it is only when we are effectively capable of putting our very lives in Common, of risking them in the struggle, that any egalitarian vindication has sense. In *our* history, there has never been an economic vindication that wasn't immediately political: if factory workers said "more salary for all" to mean "more power to all", today "income for all" means "power shared by all". As singularities that have chosen to be on the subversive side, we must have the courage to construct and share the Common *above all* among ourselves. This is what will make us strong.

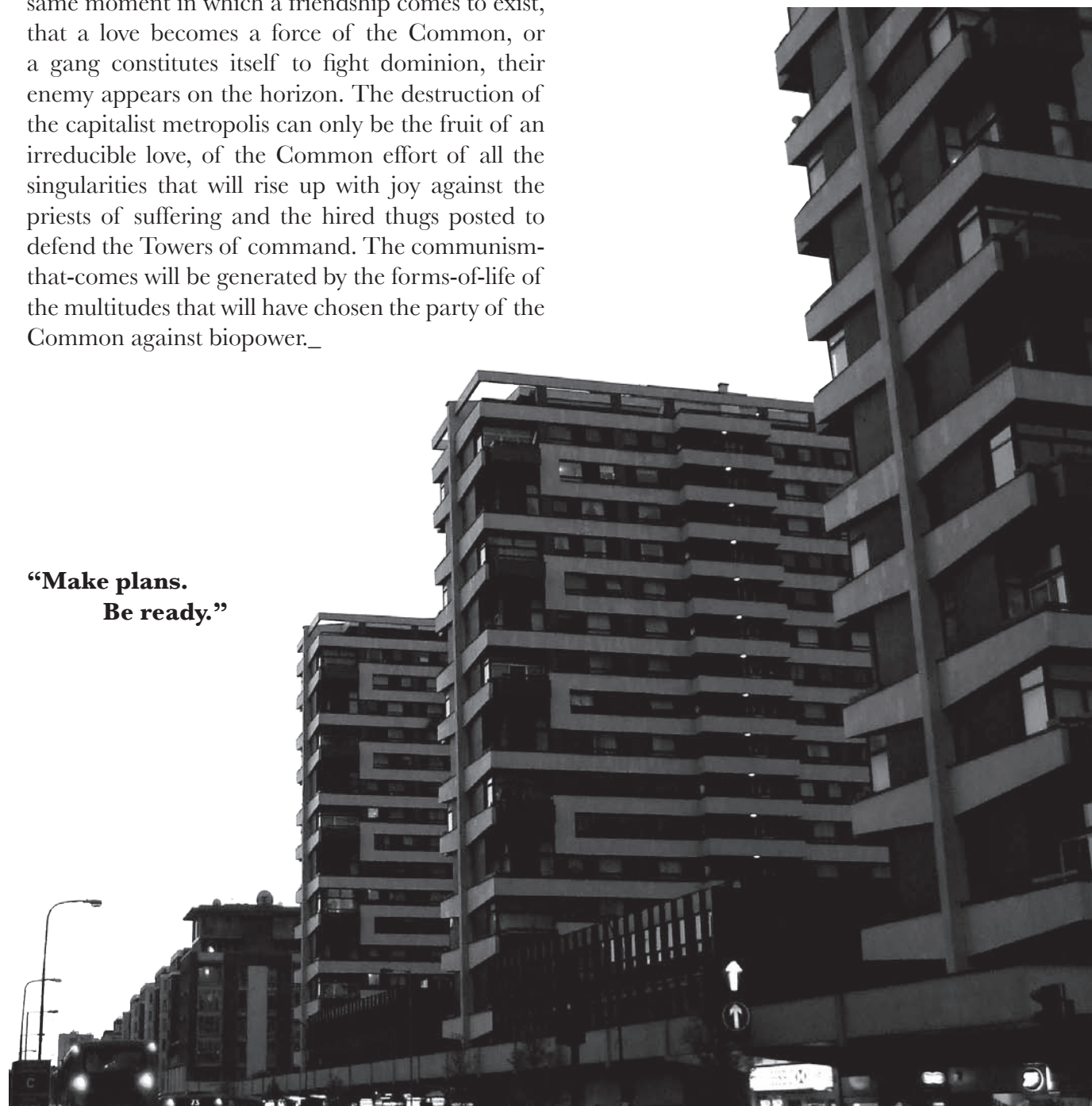
Thesis 20

A new sentimental education is in course in the rebel communities, its invention and its microphysical experimentation is on the agenda of every true revolutionary experience that fights against the Empire

¹¹A reference to the campaign of resistance to the eviction of the Ungerdomshuset collective house in Copenhagen.

today. One cannot speak of friendship, of love, of brotherhood and sisterhood, if not as a part inside the strategic advancement of the insurrection against biopower and for the Common. In the same moment in which a friendship comes to exist, that a love becomes a force of the Common, or a gang constitutes itself to fight dominion, their enemy appears on the horizon. The destruction of the capitalist metropolis can only be the fruit of an irreducible love, of the Common effort of all the singularities that will rise up with joy against the priests of suffering and the hired thugs posted to defend the Towers of command. The communism-that-comes will be generated by the forms-of-life of the multitudes that will have chosen the party of the Common against biopower._

**“Make plans.
Be ready.”**





A Separatist Opening

**Brief
words
from the
WominSpace
social center
in London**

On the morning of the 9th of May, the Wominspace occupied social centre in Hackney was evicted. On the same hot summer night, a large group of women gathered by the canal, under the street lights shining on the locked up, fully surveilled building. We discussed, through the night, the future of the collective that had formed around opening up the squatted social centre.

The urgency of confronting capital has time and again resulted in the reduction and ridiculing of gendered experiences within our movements. Creating separatist spaces is one tactic where gender can be deconstructed, people become stronger in articulating their experiences and political positions - and this in turn feeds into and strengthens our common struggles. Gender oppression has never been entirely privileged as a political struggle, meaning that self-organising as women often ends in having to battle with those who persist on asking the question feminists have been answering for years: 'so what are you then, an anarchist/politico or a feminist?' For regular users of the WominSpace, anti-capitalist struggles have taken on a new significance. We no longer have to set aside our experienced reality for the sake of a

larger, more urgent political purpose: our experienced reality is now part of this struggle.

Squatting a women and poly-trans space meant that the usual, and very gendered, divisions of tasks under pressed situations were broken... and the aim was exactly this. Having experienced activist, squat and social centre environments where urgency and action has often meant that the guy with the bolt croppers does the crack, the usual electricians man will do the electrics, and the person who speaks the loudest will be the one who is listened to, we felt the need for spaces and processes that confront and break those habits. The result was the decision of opening a poly-trans and women only social centre in London. Social centres and common spaces provide the opportunity for political alliances to be formed through practical projects. With a common understanding of the open and consensus based nature of the decision making processes, the WominSpace saw a wide variety of self-organised workshops and discussions: welding, a womens direct action group, feminist singing, discussions on trans-gender politics,

photoshop and piracy workshops, stencil-making, film-nights and a DIY health weekend to mention a few.

This spring has seen eviction threats and actual evictions of squats across the borough of Hackney. But it has also seen the proliferation of occupied spaces and coordination of resistance through the North East London Squatters Network. After a night of planning and building barricades we resisted the first eviction attempt of the WominSpace on the 16th of April. With the support of friends, the NELSN, and local boat community we had a big breakfast in front and behind the barricades, effectively blocking the entrance for the police, bailiffs and the property owner. Since then the social centre was under constant threat, finally being evicted on the 9th of May. The project will now continue in the form of an anarchy-feminist collective, potentially opening up a new space in the future.

When a space is so short-lived it means that many political differences and disagreements do not fully materialise. Within a feminist movement that has been, and still is in many ways fragmented along lines of age, race, class, gender and politics, creating a common space can be a first step in trying to work through these differences. This was the potential of the space when seen as part of a feminist movement. But it was also part of the social centre, squatter, and anarchist movement in London, and played the role of putting gender back on the agenda within these. And on a more personal level it has been an experiment and practice of an everyday politics that refuses an otherwise dominating state of emergency, speed and competition that characterise life in the neo-liberal heartland._

Inbox:

Date: Fri, 25 Jan 2008 03:14:43 -0000 (GMT)

Subject: **pretty london in January**

From: mika@balatacamp.net

To: friends@balatacamp.net

dear friends old & new

I've been meaning to send an update for some time. Since being deported from Palestine in summer 05, I've been living and working in London. Living in a pretty house in Tower Hamlets overlooking Victoria Park, with foxes, swaying beech trees and a milkman. Working for PLATFORM, an inspiring little artsorganization/campaigngroup/thinktank, running a campaign to stop the Royal Bank of Scotland funding dodgy fossil fuel projects. (<http://oyalbankofscotland.com>). On the streets with Climate Camp and London Coalition Against Poverty, against the petrol-fuelled juggernaut and Hackney's outrageous housing practices.

Yet even here, Palestine doesn't leave you. Last Friday morning at dawn a friend of mine was shot and left to bleed to death by Israeli soldiers in Balata Refugee Camp.

When I read the email sent at 10:23am – the email that said “i don't know if you heard – ahmed sanaqra was killed yesterday in balata” – my fist clenched and hit the wall. As grief and deep deep rage took hold of me, an inner part of me wanted, needed, to do something immediate and direct, to shake everything, to pause “normality” with a scream. Yet the world went on as before, with no break in the emails, shopping, fixing a leaking boiler, meetings. London continues as usual, and on Friday morning a friend was gunned down – because he said “I will not submit.”

Ahmed Sanaqra, nicknamed “Sanquur” by most of Balata, was chatting with three friends in his family's house early Friday morning. Outside, undercover Israeli gunmen dressed as Palestinians quietly moved through the alley, surrounding his house. Spotting Sanquur through the window, the gunmen opened fire, seriously wounding him. He tried to escape with his friends, but was too injured to keep moving. The Israelis chased him down and fired more bullets into his body, before leaving him to bleed to death.

We ran through the alleys together

When I lived in Balata, my flat overlooked the entrance to the camp, and thus most every Israeli invasion. Sanquur and his friend Bilal would climb

the three stories to my roof to throw bricks and rotten melons onto the armoured jeeps passing below. The two of them would run right up to the jeeps' windows, to cover them in paint. When Israeli gunmen tried to shoot those in the open, Sanquur would take shelter in the alley to my flat.

One day I was standing blocking a jeep from entering the camp, but decided to step back. As I moved towards the closest alleyway, Sanquur came running from around the corner with a bottle of white paint to throw at the Israeli jeep (not having realised I was in between him and the jeep). Unable to grip the bottle, he shouted at me to jump, and gave the bottle a downwards tilt. I jumped above the shattering glass, escaping with newly-white boots and Sanquur's deep apologies. Sanquur can be seen throwing a better-aimed bottle of paint onto a jeep's windscreen near the end of this short video.

<http://www.balatacamp.net/filmcollective/aziza.mpg>

Sometimes we ran through the alleys together in the dark, in search of the invading jeeps. We often ended up sheltering behind the same wall when the soldiers opened fire, and we'd search for stones to throw when supplies invariably ran out. One evening Sanquur pulled me back harshly into an alley, just as a volley of bullets hit the wall where I had been standing, spraying shards of shrapnel and cement at us. A week later, I felt an explosion as I walked down the main Market Street, and saw Ahmed stand up and run with blood streaming down his face. An unexploded bomb had gone off as he bent to look at it. We bundled him into a car bound for the hospital.

Beating the odds of life

Sanquur was eighteen when I was deported. In the 2.5 years since, he became an armed resistance fighter with widespread support in Balata. Unlike some other fighters, he refused to be bought off or to submit, believing that when the Israeli Army invaded Balata's streets and alleys, the residents of the camp had reason to defend themselves. He felt that this right to resist could not be signed away in exchange for salaried jobs as police officers.

Nobody from Balata has carried out a suicide attack since the Abu Ayyesh and Abu Saleem boys attacked a settlement in the West Bank in spring 2003. Yet the fighters who refuse to submit and continue firing at invading tanks and jeeps are systematically hunted down, one by one.

Sanquur survived at least three direct assassination attempts by the Israeli army. In April 07 his younger brother was killed and Sanquur shot in the hand and stomach, but he got away by running faster than

the soldiers. While still in intensive care, the army raided the hospital – Sanquur climbed out of bed and slipped out.

In 2006, the main police station, barely standing after six years of tank fire, was bulldozed on top of him. Sanquur lay silent in the rubble for three days, forced to drink his own piss, while soldiers stepped on him. His escape, despite the odds, allowed an unlikely glimmer of hope to survive in Balata. His survival began to symbolize Balata's tenacity for continued struggle, "sumud". Camp residents clutched tight to the belief that, unlike everybody else who has been killed or imprisoned, Sanquur would survive, free.

Carry on fighting

Dreams end. Last Friday, the Israeli Duvdevan unit cornered and executed Sanquur. I haven't worked out yet how to grieve when my friends are blown apart by rockets or receive a bullet in the head, even though it happens time and time again. Hani Hashash, Disco Skipper, Mohammed Abu Lel.

My rage wants to consume me, but has no target. Hours after reading that Sanquur had been executed, fury made me shake as my bus passed through the City. I don't want to choke it down, to not feel. bell hooks describes rage as "a necessary aspect of resistance struggle" – but what to direct it at? These feelings don't translate into writing a letter to my MP, nor demonstrating or blocking a road. The continuity in daily life fuels the fury, demanding a rupture, a break in our privilege and comfort of pubs, movies, shops – life and business as usual.

Honestly, I don't know how to live my grief and rage. The only answer I have is, if our political struggles are effective and fulfilling, to throw ourselves into them wholeheartedly. Together with our friends who are still alive and feeling, to hold each other up and carry on fighting.

Faced with the multiple occupations and oppression of the UK, the US and Israel, death and murder have been, are and will be felt by many of our movements for liberation and justice. Mostly, when these struggles take place in England, we have the privilege of our friends not being gunned down beside us. Not so in Palestine, Derry and Belfast, Bolivia, Nigeria or Iraq. We will lose more friends. There will be grief, fury and rage with no outlet, but that's part of struggling for a better world, I guess.

Love & struggle, mika

P.S. If “Balata Refugee Camp” means nothing to you, or you don’t understand why Sanquar became a resistance fighter, see <http://www.balatacamp.net> or watch <http://www.archive.org/details/balata>

Also:

PLATFORM <http://www.platformlondon.org>

London Coalition Against Poverty <http://www.lcap.org.uk>

Climate Camp <http://www.climatecamp.org.uk>

PPS If you’re in London and want to meet, let’s do that.

3 attachments – view all images



p1180141.jpg



paint_2.jpg



p1180156.jpg



La Felguera Collective (Madrid committee)

You'll never have a life in your fucking house



The difficulty most of the average population in Spain faces in getting a decent house (rocketing prices, lifetime mortgages, crap temporary jobs with very low salaries, high prices of houses to rent and so on...) gave rise to the "movement for a dignified housing" during last year. What began as an autonomous initiative ended up being recuperated by all sorts of leftist political professional opportunists, from the Bolsheviks to the official trade unions, not to forget certain kind of reformist "anarchists". The most radicalised sectors tried to fight back by putting forward ideas such as boycotting the polls for the regional parliaments that took place last year, but their proposal did not prosper because of opposition by the aforementioned recuperators/retrievers¹. The present text was written by the situationist/anarchist group "La Felguera" as a response to the flaws and the lack of radicalism that characterised, since its very beginning, such a movement - in an attempt to set up a more radicalised and anarchic counter-offensive within this field. One of the ways chosen to do the latter has been to reverse

the meaning of the initial motto for this campaign ("you will never have a house in your fucking life"), turning it into the one that can be read in the heading of this article: "you'll never have a life in your fucking house". I think that if any radical political initiative were to be set up in London, it should learn from such actions and always try to prevent any smelly leftists from manipulating and using our genuine struggles for their own ends. Following is the translation of the second chapter of the La Felguera text. The rest will be finished in the months to come and will be (hopefully) published bit by bit in further issues of this journal. The translator is not a professional one but takes the entire responsibility for any mistakes. English is not my mother tongue but I have tried to do my best anyway. If someone knows how to enhance this translation, feel free to do it and send an improved version to Occupied London at occupiedlondon@riseup.net

Translated from the Spanish original by Mohawk, in the Autumn of year 23rd of the Orwell Era (2007 by the already obsolete Judaeo-Christian calendar).

Our right to regain the city



The struggle for dignified housing nowadays only hides away a more meaningful claim arising from a widespread and anti-civilisatory unease: the claim to get our city back.

By organizing life within cubicles (to live in lined/carpeted/upholstered beehives) regardless of whether they are thirty or one hundred square meters (we don't give a damn about that), the city is denied to us because it becomes nothing but the reflection of a socio-economic model that should be swept away completely and forever. By building a life that forces us to move/rebound from work to home, from home to work or from work to alienating, tasteless and boring leisure venues, there is no space left for proper life either in this or in any other western city... unless, of course, the whole mapping was to be subverted. Such subversion of life does not imply merely a change to the background decoration, but a brand new political context of such radicalism.

The unbearable truth of the incomplete (half-) life of the present is already hitting an increasingly large number of people: When they have their half-rights, they will then get their half-life and therefore, their half-happiness, having simultaneously given up the rest, the most important stuff - those things without whose existence nothing can ever be felt as meaningful or fulfilling. They will then realise, disillusioned and disappointed, that mere resentment towards

the middle class or the owners/landlords does not eliminate the alienation of the contemporary world.

The problem, therefore, is not - or not only - that we have no access to "decent" housing because prices are prohibitive and our salaries pure shit. We must go further and ask if it is possible to have a decent life within the framework of this city, some city spectacular and alien to our actual needs. When the whole issue is reduced to a purely economic question - which is to say simple access to cheaper housing - the fight becomes blind and limited from going any further; in other words, it limits itself. The issue of housing cannot be raised seriously and radically without criticizing the very foundations on which the city itself rests, together with the urbanism and the daily life that exists in its framework... and such a critique is nothing but the critique of capitalism itself.

Police control is exercised today in an increasingly absolute and despotic fashion. Through the control of space in the city (by means of controlling areas of existence), domination over the political is also ensured. In this context, capitalism reproduces its own spaces of action: It speculates with the goods that it has previously put into circulation following the flow of the need for housing with its specific change value. Housing, then, is not the natural infrastructure humans need for their survival, but the last dispossession of their

alienated existence. Power has stolen from us not only our sleep but also our dreams. The housing problem exists within a given structure... We'll have to tear down that structure then!

Henri Lefebvre once asked about the city - *"what has it been for Power?"* It is that ferment filled with suspicious activities and crime, it is home to turmoil. State power and big businesses can hardly conceive a better strategy than belittle, degrade, destroy the urban society. The city has always been a venue suspicious of power: It is inhabited by desires and provides spaces and time allowing for the enjoyment of the public sphere. Until very recently some feeling could be found, that of belonging to a "place" and to a true community - some feeling that has always been the germ of resistance and revolution: Normality in the city is dissolved and "deviated" behaviours find a privileged place for their realisation within the anonymity of the mass. The city also used to be where one could expect the unexpected, the "magic", the baffling, the sort of phenomena that could disrupt daily life - and change it. Hence one of the main strategies of power has always been to control the urban space, to destroy its social networks by means of absolute separation between the people who live there and even between them and the places they inhabit, ultimately turning the city into a sterile, empty and predictable "non-place" where nothing can, nor should, happen.

Every day, then, we see how the city is being destroyed in an accelerated manner, disintegrating the few remaining fragments of solidarity, community, shared and enjoyed by living in neighbourhoods and on the streets. Meanwhile, a vast operation of camouflage is being set up in order to continue the degradation of our living conditions and the expansion of misery everywhere, some operation trying to pass off as an enhancement of our lives. Politicians, builders, entrepreneurs, engineers, architects, journalists, bureaucrats and of course, the party of the state, the "ciudadanistas" ("citizenists")² all work towards the same goal: trying to convince us that the destruction taking place in the city eliminating any trace of free life is inevitable, and advantageous for our lives. If we give up our dreams and desires of

happiness and agree to cooperate, we can expect to enjoy a safe and comfortable life in the new city of the image, the technology, the entertainment and the so-called communications.

What are they offering us? New infrastructures that will enable us to get faster to the workplaces where we lose our lives, whether in a metaphorical or in a literal sense. New alternatives of entertainment where we can spend the little and insignificant spare time we have left, involved in passive activities from which the resort to imagination and play as well as the chances for joy and friendship have been banished. New and sophisticated technological gadgets without which (they say) we can no longer live, but that far from having improved our lives, have impoverished and turned them more boring and predictable. New forms of communication that are only useful to further isolate and separate us (no matter how much they keep claiming the opposite) from those that we love. Even our homes are no longer a shelter.

It has been said that one of the defining characteristics of our time is the assimilation and consequent comparability between leisure and work time:

"While labor and pleasure are becoming more and more similar in their structure, they are at the same time separated ever more strictly by invisible lines of demarcation. Pleasure and Spirit [Geist] are being driven out of both in equal measure. In one as the other, brute seriousness and pseudo-activity prevails."

-Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima moralia*. Reflections on a Damaged Life

The same is true of space. Every house is increasingly akin to any average/ standard office space. The domestic space is becoming increasingly cold and impersonal. The low-cost designer Ikea-like furniture that is being imposed replays the sepsis and the faceless uniformity of the office. Not only does it say nothing about the person who lives in a given domicile, but its "interchangeability" with the furniture of any other home or even with that of the office, the doctor's waiting room or the headquarters of the Ministry of Finance is in itself indicative of the epoch in which we live. It is

not important, it seems to be telling us, where we might be or what is being done in a given site, since everything is already the same everywhere.

On the one hand, the countless technological gadgets and appliances that fill the house are another effect of the assimilation of the household into the workplace, both saturated of technology and empty of humanity, sensitivity and beauty - and on the other, a consequence of the new leisure style - lonely and isolated from the others and the environment; in a word: autistic. Hence the curious paradox of a clerk who comes back home tired for having spent eight hours in front of a computer and plugs in his "personal" computer to spend another eight hours connected, but of course, now enjoying her or his leisure time.

Throughout the twentieth century we have seen how the architecture of the domestic space gradually changed: adapting to the needs and interests of the powers that govern society it transformed, subtly and quietly but also dramatically, the different customs and ways of relation and communication within the framework of the city and the home. The situationist Ivan Chhtcheglov said once that *"Architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space, of modulating reality, of engendering dreams."*³

As usual, the situationists were better understood by their foes than by their potential supporters so the architecture of the last years of the twentieth century has had as its highest goal to effectively articulate time and modulate reality - not in order to create dreams but instead, to fully develop them nightmare characteristics of the consumerist society: the separation, the lack of real communication, the most absolute loneliness and mistrust among individuals.

We only need to visit any residential neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city to see this. Every house here looks identical to all others but still aspires to be different. There, fear, resentment and contempt toward the neighbour next door can always be felt and smelt in the air; towering gates are therefore erected to increase the distance between each other even more: you at your house, I'm in mine and God is in everybody's - not the Christian or Muslim God, but the one of

this brand new religion posed by the consumerist way of life.

Gradually, a dual process has begun to develop in every physical structure that is a house. On the one hand its space is increasingly turning into a kind of "bunker": the important issue here is to isolate ourselves from the outside, from the streets (and therefore from the people who often hang out on them), since it is on them that the unpredictable, dangerous, unpleasant is to be found.

"Nothing good happens on the street, under the sun; In times of Fascism an open door or a large window are somewhat threatening, and the house becomes, once again, a stronghold, if not a catacomb."

-Ernst Bloch, The Principle of Hope

We must be isolated from one another because, as it is repeatedly stated by the mass-media, someone will always want to mug, rape or murder us. That way, the street is seen as a place to be feared, rather than be discovered, claimed, taken over and made ours.

Yet the isolation must be offset by the development of infrastructures making people feel there is something pleasant outdoors after all. Thus, all sorts of elements and ornaments are added to the urban landscape in a bid to disguise, often ostentatiously, the ugliness and degradation of all senses that are being imposed by the new constructions, and above all by the impoverishment of life experiences, communication and sensitivity. Hence next to each new urban housing project, artificial parks are being created - spaces where everything is regulated to its finest detail, from the time for grass irrigation to the shut-down times.

Meanwhile we witness gigantic centres of entertainment and consumption proliferating and spreading everywhere. In these spaces security and order prevail, offering a sort of worry-less, isolated, disturbance-free and experience-free amusements. A cold entertainment lacking any emotion and feeling other than those sold to us at their corresponding price. Fourier's old dream, which foresaw streets closed to the outside world has been achieved without, alas, its utopian and

social dimension - leaving nothing but the isolation and omnipresence of lifeless commodities.

The house ceases to be an intimate and personal place in which to rest and live, and becomes a place as alien to us as our workplace, which is why we try to spend as little time as possible among its four walls and flee from it as soon as we have a chance to do so. The little time spent on it is filled with television and DVD's as if nothing more could be done there and perhaps that is now the truth. The street does not belong to us either. "If you are not in the office and do not want to be in your house then consume", they keep telling us. The city is turned in a massive theme park divided into different environments: leisure centres, monumental/historical centre, shopping areas etc... In each, absolutely everything must have a price and a clearly defined role.

The street has been reduced to a transit point, down from a living space to discover and to intervene socially and politically. Those who still dare to merely venture alone through the city streets, avenues and side streets become potential suspects._

**You are living in upholstered/lined
beehives, dreaming about a safe future.
Rubble, it's all your future is! Rubble!**
-RIP (mythical Basque/Spanish punk 80's band)

Notes

¹ *Recuperators/retrievers*: This word/s has/have been used here in the same way used in the Situationist theoretical writings. It therefore refers to those individuals and organizations who claim to support every radical revolutionary struggle with the treacherous purpose of using these to support their own interests, be it the growth of their particular "sects" or the individual political careers of some so-called "progressive" leaders. Their real aim is, in exchange, to become the next interlocutors

talking on behalf of the "oppressed masses" with power as well as to convince the most radicalised elements to keep waiting for one thousand more years till the "objective conditions" for revolution eventually arise. This "recuperation" of what otherwise begin as radical and non-negotiating conflicts contributes to de-activating initial radical impulses and to channel them through the systemic mechanism of reformism. This has been for a very long time the actual role of the left everywhere, from the Communist and Social Democratic parties to some so-called anarchist trade unions, not forgetting a quite vast spectrum of Bolshevik/ Leninist, Troskyst, Maoist and even more ludicrous and deluded groups holding funny and meaningless denominations.

² *"Ciudadanistas" ("citizenists")*: This word may not exist in English yet so I have decided to include it here. I have clumsily translated it into "citizenists/citizenism without being sure if such a thing is grammatically possible. At any rate, "ciudadanistas" and "ciudadanismo" are relatively new words in the Spanish political jargon. They make reference to those sectors of the middle class that are at risk of dropping out and see themselves among the dispossessed due to the present acceleration and increase of competitiveness brought by the economic globalisation of capitalism. This way the aforementioned social groups would "radicalise" themselves in an highly opportunistic and hypocritical attempt to regain their lost status. In order to do so, they become "the party of the state" and strive for a return to the old "welfare state" which saw them arise as an artificial social group turning themselves into the favourite aim for the policies of many "recuperator" left-wing (sometimes even far right or far left) organizations. The vast majority of these "new leftists" (leaving apart a few rare exceptions) are not interested at all in destroying the state/capitalism/patriarchy/everyday life but instead in maintaining the patronising presence of State intervention in the economy. They are the main "apostles" of the motto "another capitalism is possible". -An impossible monster with noble feelings, "green" policies and philanthropic expectations.

³ *Formulary for a New Urbanism*, Internationale Situationniste #1

Anarchist Influences on British Planning before 1940

by
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Social anarchism can be described as a radical philosophical and political movement, strategically aimed to abolish all forms of injustice, coercion and authority—especially state's authority. That is, societies should exist without rulers. It can be roughly distinguished into two great streams of thought, within economic and political fields, which overwhelmingly characterize the nineteenth

century (particularly, its second part). The first stream emphatically advocates peaceful means of free human co-operation as the ultimate path to a potential anarchist social order. Its chief representatives are Proudhon and Kropotkin. The second stream alternatively champions the route of physical

violence in the destruction of all authoritative relations. Its main spokesmen are Bakunin and Sorel.

Social anarchism has been significantly influential to both urban and regional planning. Its greatest influence is particularly

associated with the non-violent and reformist process of social transformation suggested within the theories of Proudhon and Kropotkin. The “*Garden City*” movement and the plans for metropolitan decentralization are strongly related to Kropotkin’s radical ideas about self-relied, autonomous communities. The ideals of regionalism, as formed by Proudhon and Reclus, are closely connected to modern territorial struggles for regional self-determination, as well as a specific tradition within regional planning that looks upon regions as physico-cultural entities.

In terms of planning theory, anarchism represents the ultimate limit of a process of structural reform within community. This process aims at the abolition of the state as an instrument of class coercion and inequality. The aim here is the formation of autonomous (self-governed) units of “*associated labour*”, which are organically linked to larger ensembles by following the Proudhonian principle of federation. The establishment of the “*non-acquisitive society*” is to take place in a regional setting, practicing self-reliance. Small, decentralized units of production, organized on mutualist or cooperative principles, predominantly serve local and regional markets. Social control is from within the community and occurs spontaneously through the practice of fair exchange.

The objective of the anarchist movement is the creation, on the margins of the still existing state, of an

alternative society, rather than the destruction of the physical infrastructure of the capitalist state. The “*autonomous units of associated labour*” in workshops and factories would be spatially based on small localities, or “*communes*”. However, there is no organization for the unity of revolutionary thought and action. Participatory and nonhierarchical groups of workers would merge to carry out the revolution and establish units of associated labour by their free consent as the basic form of anarchist society. Freely chosen productive work is essential to the realization of one’s full humanity from the repressive institutions of organized violence (e.g. the state).

The early visions of the planning movement, particularly those of Howard and Geddes, have decisively stemmed from the anarchist movement. Their ideas, somehow similar to those of the anarchist pioneers, were not only related to an alternative built form but also to an alternative society. This society should depart from any sort of capitalist or bureaucratic-socialist state. It should be based on the voluntary co-operation among men and women, peacefully working and living in small self-governing commonwealths. The need for the emergence of such an alternative society can be ascribed to the high housing densities, intensive competition for space, increasing land rents and transportation problems raised in large cities during the Victorian Age. In addition to the so called “*land question*” in urban areas, the depression and poor conditions

of living in rural areas was acute.

Howard’s plan for the provision of locally-managed and self-governed working communities is closely related to the anarchist concepts of the state of total liberty. The strategy and organization of such communities were based on the mobilization of the community or group itself. Services would be provided by the municipality, or private contractors. Every man and woman would be an entrepreneur. These anarchist influences were certainly opposite with any form of organization and sponsorship by the state. However, the mechanisms suggested for the development of “*Garden City*” societies would not provide the sufficient impulse for an effective mobilization of the community. These processes required an intervention of “*organizers*” from outside, and others who could teach both a new awareness and the necessary skills for a self-reliant practice. Though the anarchist movement provided the foundation of some sort of planning “*from below*”, it did not fully succeed to provide the appropriate means of qualitatively changing the philosophy of planning implementation.

Nevertheless, the anarchist movement substantially contributed to the emergence and development of the concept of regional planning. According to the anarchist concepts, the self-governed communes should be joined to one another through a principle of federation. In this principle, the lower-order units retain more powers than they

relinquish, and dissociation is always possible. The natural unit above the commune is the province or region, which is governed autonomously through its constituent communes. In this anarchist ideal vision, money would be in circulation, and there would be little trade beyond the immediate region which, in most respects, remains a self-sufficient entity.

The innovative ideas generated by Proudhon and Bakunin about a society based on a decentralized and non-hierarchical system of federal government, which subsequently influenced Kropotkin and Reclus, were crucial on how Howard and Geddes visioned society. Geddes was particularly influenced from Kropotkin to develop his plan about the combination of industrial with agricultural work (town with country), as a response to the dissipation of resources and energies by the spreading cities. Such ideas as industrial decentralization could be viewed within the anarchist concept of social reconstruction. Geddes's position was comprehensively aiming at encouraging the collective power of individuals and the self-management of the community within the entire city region. Similar anarchist ideas did also influence the members of the group – and, in particular, Mumford – that founded the Regional Planning Association of America. Mumford's ideas are clearly connected with Geddes's formulations. These refer to the need for decentralization of city's industries in order to prevent

economic recession and exploit the benefits of the technological revolution (as Kropotkin had also stated).

At the beginning of the 20th century, anarchistic types of housing developments appeared around the periphery of London (southwards and westwards, in particular). This cheap kind of housing scheme was an articulated response to the low quality of living conditions for a great number of inhabitants in the wider London area. The Anti-Marxist movements of the Fabian society and the Social Democratic Foundation significantly contributed to these plot-developments, or piece-meal developments. By opposing to the historical materialistic ideas about the need for state intervention in order to finally achieve the free and good society, they suggested the use of the collective power of London inhabitants to deal with the social problem of housing. This anarchist-like idea influenced the establishment of appropriate legal acts which enabled the building of "*working class tenements*" on green-field sites at the edge of the London region boundaries, and even beyond them.

The development of the plotlands in Southern England can be seen as an expression of revolt against the social inequities of the urban-based capitalism, as well as a preference for political and geographical dispersal. From this standpoint, the association of plot-ownership with freedom rests less on the material fact of ownership as an end in itself, and

more on opportunities to create a small world of one's own choosing. Similarly with the "*Garden City*" concept, the development of plotlands became an innovative way of rejecting urban society as it had emerged.

Influences on these types of concepts and developments should be ascribed to the long tradition of ideas and social movements related to anarchist thought. In particular, the influence of Proudhon's model of peasant proprietorship that rekindled the hopes of those who saw a future in limited property ownership should be explicitly recognized and acknowledged. Though only few self-consciously linked the acquisition of property with these broader political arguments, the perspective of a world of plots surprisingly offered a wide variety of new ways for a better life. According to social anarchist thinking, the possession of land was not considered as a source of material wealth but as a symbolic break with landlords and authority.

Summing up, it could be said that concepts developed in the regionalist movement, the "*Garden City*" and the plotlands development did embrace powerful elements of persisting popular currents about property of one's own, house built with one's own hands, and mutual aid instead of external controls. However, such developments were for many people the best that was temporarily available rather than self-reflexive anarchist or utopian expressions._



Hackney, Algeria

by Antonis V. antonymous@riseup.net

“She closes her eyes and
brings Algeria to mind;
Some Algeria she never
saw” *

She tries to shake off her confusion. Can this be right? That little message fixed on the lamppost doesn't seem to be lying, that's for sure. According to it she is now standing in a designated good behaviour zone. While reading on, she takes her hands out of her pockets, half-nervously holding them behind her back, at the same time trying to look as innocent, sweet and well-behaved as possible. It seems to be working: She does feel ever-so-slightly more proper. She proudly looks around only to realise there is no-one to witness this positive behavioural change of hers, no tapping on the back, no well-done cheers, not tonight, not here. She hangs around a bit longer all well-mannerly, secretly hoping some police car will drive by, slow down, the driver to roll down the window, extend his hand and offer her a sweetie: *Who's a good girl?* But the police never come, that must mean we are all behaving well tonight, no need for them to intervene, it is the bonfire night, lights and banging sounds all around but believe her officer, she would never lie to you, not while standing in a Good Behaviour Zone anyway: it's all well-behaved and very, very quiet on the Hackney front.

Quiet on the Hackney front... Somewhere in between one moment of peace and another, she cannot help but wonder where exactly that front actually is. Amidst the dense clustering of present and future shiny live/work complexes it would take some large unbuilt space (a street, a park, a square) to separate parts increasingly mingling together. Victoria Park. This is also a front, a momentary scene of an omnipresent, ongoing battle - even if a winner was obnoxiously pronounced upon the park's naming. But no, no-one can declare victory at Victoria Park. Surrounded by four different neighbourhoods and two boroughs, she walks to its North-East corner. Warm: she's now close enough to the industrial funfair of Hackney Wick, the new hotspot of gentrification, kindly sponsored by the forthcoming Olympic so-called Games. But this, the middle the park, is hard for any borough and any neighbourhood to claim. A neutral zone of sorts, the police sirens heard somewhere far, far away.

She now stands there, in the middle of the park, and the permanent feeling of being intruded upon starts to wear off; pre-defined routes gradually

evaporate, possibilities open up, they call for some unnecessary, some badly needed perambulation. She stops and looks up: the faint figure of a person sitting on a rooftop smoking somewhere in the distance...

The wide-open urban space is the front: The street, the park, the square. To its aid, backing it up from afar, are newly-found pockets of resistance. For all their relative freedom, open urban spaces are still very much on the ground: metaphorically (that's where the struggle still is, where it will always be) and also literally: public urban space remains fixed on the ground level. Yet our city-wandering practice might have something to learn from the swarming manoeuvre. For Weizman (2006), the swarm exemplifies the principle of non-linearity apparent in spatial, organizational and temporal terms. He explains: For a Palestinian fighter caught up in this battle, Israelis seem *'to be everywhere: behind, on the sides, on the right and on the left. How can you fight that way?'*. Invert this perspective, flip around the position of the dominant with that of the dominated, project (if you can) the reality of Palestinian occupation to that of everyday London and there you have it: Our pockets of resistance are not just behind enemy lines, they are above, beneath and in between them. The fragmented |c|i|t|y| breaks (us) up in a million parts; resistance is to be found in every single one of these - and every single one of us.

"For the consciousness of the nation..."

...the sounds/ of the/ Asian/ Dub/ Foundation". Words and tunes blasting brusquely through her earphones making for an appropriate aural symbolism - what with her senses and experiences cut apart, separating what she sees, what she hears, what she eats, smells, thinks and feels... Until all feelings are set apart while she's finally cut off from her surroundings all together.

Baudrillard's words come to mind. *"A man eating alone in the heart of the city. You see people doing that, (...) the human flotsam of conviviality, no longer even concealing themselves to eat leftovers in public."* She eats and she walks, a diner and a dweller. She's broken in parts and once so, each part comes together with

the rest to recompose her self. In this alone she is not alone. Eleven million people in this city; eleven million fragments broken apart and recomposed spontaneously; eleven million fragments anguishly holding together a fragile, delirious mosaic: London's façade.

The façade keeps changing itself, from the colonial to the post-colonial, from the modern to the post-modern. Change is linear and gradual inasmuch as spontaneous and explosive. Each explosion is simultaneous to an implosion: When broken the image of the city is replaced by a replica depicting the original, in turn becoming an original itself. In reality, of course, little changes... The same subconscious rhythm runs through the urban, the same need to map it out, to conceptualise and understand it in order to control it - or maybe, to disrupt this very control. The battle for the city is, it has always been about understanding - like in the the Casbah (the walled citadel) in colonial Algeria:

"...to outsiders, (it) appears to be a confusing labyrinth of lanes and dead-end allies flanked by picturesque houses; however if one loses oneself there, it is enough to go down again towards the sea to reposition themselves."

If the urban is the battlefield positioning oneself within it is (literally!) of strategic importance. Positioning and repositioning: To acutely conceptualise evolving patterns within the urban fabric and to accurately respond.

Midnight at Regent's Canal. Surrounded by many of her previous addresses, she's facing the so-called Bridge Academy, a school that when open will be run by one of the biggest financial firms in the world. She resists the temptation to think about something so blatantly outrageous and succumbs to another thought. The school's main building, its structure slowly shaping up over the months, is mimicking the architecture of an ancient theatre, yet spectators are not to be positioned on the stands like their ancient counterparts. Instead, the luminous interior, seen through the glass façade now seems the stage, its inhabitants the new actors. The re-arrangement of the spatial layout and its inverted uses might appear disorientating *"yet it*

is enough to go down again towards the sea to reposition oneself."

She is walking by the canal and by now she knows: one day, the permanent feeling of being intruded upon will wear off. Uncaptured by omnipresent CCTV cameras, playing bad in good behaviour zones she will, for once, define her own route, she will be the dweller, the walker, the diner, the person sitting on the rooftop smoking.

She opens her eyes and from here she finally sees it, *that Algeria she never saw.*_

* This text comes as a response to a comic strip by Leandros, who re-appeared in the comics scene by illustrating this journal's previous issue. That comic strip might very well be some ten years old... Some of us are still around, still wanting to see them Algerias we have yet to see.

Perhaps the time has come to capture our own Algerias in mind, produce images, lest be assured, different to one another – and to move on.

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Weizman, E. (2006): *"The Art of War"*, Frieze Magazine (99), http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/the_art_of_war/

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